

THE DIVINE RELIGION
—Bhāgavata Dharma and Culture

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REDISCOVERING INDIA

THE DIVINE RELIGION

Bhagavata Dharma and Culture.

VYAS R.N.

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Preface

I feel pleasure in placing this little volume in the hands of my intelligent readers. Religion has played a very important role in the lives of people from the very beginning of human life. But change is an inevitable phenomenon of nature. This change has affected our modern world very mightily. Old beliefs have been shattered, and old institutions have been shaken to their very foundations. In this environment, we need rethinking about our almost all social institutions. But we need rethinking about religion very urgently. Religion has become much maligned and condemned through the ages. Many wild and cruel acts have been perpetrated under the cloak of religion. We have come to a stage where either we reshape our concept of religion, or be prepared to affix the last nail to its coffin.

In the present work I have given sketches of prevalent religions. But I have gone beyond them to reconstruct right nature of religion. If my reconstructed view of religion is accepted, and it deserves acceptance, then religion shall prove to be a boon for mankind. It is my firm opinion that authentic religion can solve many of our insoluble problems like obstacles in the path of establishment of international peace, social justice and welfare of individuals and human society.

The present volume has been kept deliberately short to enable an average reader to go through it without investing much time, money and energy. My book is meant for every literate person including of course the persons who are really interested in the betterment of our world. Modern man has more opportunities to reconstruct or reshape any institution in the way he likes as compared with the man of olden period

who was more solidly bound by the [shackles of superstition, dogmatism and lack of lucid thinking. Man has become more receptive to any constructive and rational thought.

I have tried to show in the present work that the Bhāgavata Dharma as enunciated in the Bhagavadgītā and the Bhāgavata is the only eternal religion that can suit the temper of modern man. Our modern 'religions' must rise to the height of the Bhāgavata Dharma to be useful for our world and agreeable to our rational thinking.

My only objective in writing this work is to invite the attention of rational readers to the features of the only authentic religion. The Bhāgavata Dharma is the only religion which does not demand any rejection of one's faith. It only wants to give every faith right direction and right contour. I can describe the nature of the Bhāgavata Dharma in the words of Rumi,

"Should there be any lover, O Muslim—it's me

Should there be any believer, infidel, or

Christian mink—it's me...

None of the world's seventy-two sects and creeds

exist, I swear by God. Every creed

and sect there is—it's me."

The Bhāgavata Dharma is the Universal religion. Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa declares in the Bhagavadgītā:

"Whatever form any devotee with faith wishes to worship, I make that faith of his steady." (VII-21)

And

"The knowledge by which the one Imperishable Being is seen in all existences, undivided in the divided, know, that knowledge to be the real knowledge." (XVIII-20)

The Bhāgavata states in the Veda Stuti :

"The really wise persons see only the Lord in everything."
(paśyanti nānā na vipaścito ye)

I will not dwell more on this point here. Let the readers go through the book and form their own opinions.

The only aim the present work has set before itself is to lead people from 'religions' to the RELIGION.

But after establishing real character of religion, the present work presents a picture of the noble culture based on it. Our literature, art, science, politics, everything needs a complete transformation which can be made possible only by a sincere acceptance of the Bhāgavata Dharma.

Veda Vyāsa was the most profound thinker of India. His concept of culture has been presented here for the benefit of a modern reader.

I shall feel that my labour has been rewarded if readers catch the spirit of constructive thinking produced before them in the form of this book.

I thank the publisher for publishing this work without any delay.

Academy of Social Thought
INDORE, M P., India.

Dr. R.N. Vyas

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OUTLINES OF 'RELIGIONS'

1

Hinduism

Religion has played a very significant role in human life right from the moment the individual could realise the fact of his existence and made an effort to understand it in relation to the vast, outer nature. Whether we like it or not, religion has wielded immense influence on the individual life and the society constituted by him. August Comte has stated that the evolution of mankind took place through three stages which he has described as theological, metaphysical, and positive states.

Scholars have made efforts to understand the origin of religion in their own ways. For example, Hegel and James Frazer thought that religion was born out of magic ; E.B. Tylor on the other hand saw the origin of religion in animism; Herbert Spencer expressed the opinion that religion came into being because of a cult of ancestor worship; Max Muller propounded the view that a feeling of awe towards nature was responsible for the birth of religion ; Emile Durkheim came out with a view according to which religion is a product of rites and rituals characterising a society.

While these views have their own importance, it would not

be very rewarding for us to waste our time in finding out as to how religion was brought into being. Whatever may be the origin of the institution of religion, it is more material for us to know how it can be yoked for serving mankind in a constructive manner. We should not forget that man is no longer that credulous creature who could follow everything suggested to him by a priest rather blindly. The modern man has transcended that stage of blind and unreflective credulousness. Now he makes an effort to understand everything in a rational manner. Only when his rationality accepts anything, he accepts a creed and modifies his conduct. Macaulay had stated that there cannot be more than two hundred persons in the big city of London who have faith in the Bible though all of them profess to be Christians. Fenelon has written in his 'Letters', "There is practically nothing that men do not prefer to God. A tiresome detail of business, an occupation utterly pernicious to health, employment of time in ways one does not dare to mention, anything rather than God."

We have therefore come to a stage where our ideas about religion must be crystal clear. We must go deep into the very nature of religion. If it has something worthwhile for us, we should accept it; but if it does not contain anything worthwhile, we should be prepared to abandon it for good. We cannot accept any sterile and useless tradition howsoever long-standing it may be. But before we actually try to analyse the concept of real religion, we must acquaint ourselves to some extent with the various religions (of course the important ones alone) that have flourished on earth. We shall start our study with Hinduism, and then proceed to study Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity (Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Eastern Orthodoxy), and Islam respectively, and finally shall try to understand and define the nature and role of authentic religion in the modern period. We shall make an endeavour to find out how far and in what way religion can be of any service to mankind.

Though Hinduism is one of the oldest religions of the

Hinduism

world, it is not possible to understand it in the way one tries to understand other religions like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism etc. The reason for this difficulty in understanding the true nature of Hinduism lies in the fact that, firstly, it is very liberal and practically every shade of idea finds its place in its system, and secondly, it does not have any founder like a Zoroaster, Jesus, or Muhammada. Even the term Hinduism cannot help us here. For example John Clark Archer writes : "Hindu stems from an Indo-European, perhaps an Indo-Iranian, root for 'river'—no clan or tribal name, or something merely local or ancestral, but something rather whose origin and volume defied locality." He has still further stated, "The moving tribesmen were impressed by the mighty river and called their new home 'Hindustan' 'Land of the river' when the Persian word for river had become probably in post-Vedic times the Sanskrit 'Sindu'. India is short for Sindhu kashthan—the same as Hindustan—but it was perhaps the Roman Vergil who called the whole land 'India'."

It is not desirable for us here to go into the details of the origin of the term 'Hindu' because such speculative thinking shall not help us much in understanding its real nature. It is sufficient for us to understand that Hinduism is a religion which differs from all other religions of the world in being very accommodative and comprehensive in nature and having a solid speculative, nay, philosophical insight at its back practically right from its inception. Radhakrishnan has rightly declared that "Half the world moves on independent foundations which Hinduism supplied." The outstanding features of Hinduism can be summarised in the following manner so that the readers may get an idea as to the nature of Hinduism.

The very first thing to be noted is that Hindu religion is based on the shruti, smriti, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and Puranas, and Tantras. The Rigveda is the oldest work

of the Hindus. In the Rigveda we find a tendency at times of worshipping more than one god. But it is not a case of polytheism that is found there ; it is a case of what has been called as Henotheism. And Henotheism is in fact a sort of Monotheism and Monism. The statements like "One Supreme Reality alone is called as Indra etc." and "All these luminous forces of nature become one in Him" or as we find in the Yajurveda "There is no physical representation of Him (the contemplation of) Whose name is highly glorifying," prove this fact.

We find present in the Rigveda an image of the Supreme Lord : "He whose eyes are everywhere, Whose mouth is in all sides, Whose arms are all around and Whose feet are in all directions is the only One Divine Being Who has created the heaven and the earth and by means of His all-spreading arms He infuses life into all beings." "O God, Who providest all the creatures with proper habitation, Thou art our Father, and O God of infinite activities, Thou art our Mother too." About this God Yajurveda declares :

"In the sight of the ignorant He seems to be moving, whereas the enlightened one knows that He does not move ; for the ignorant He is very far, but for the enlightened one He is near as hand. He is within all this universe and He is even outside all this universe."

Thus we find in the Hindu literature of religion a very sublime concept of the Godhead that is rationally very sound. This very concept of the the Supreme was given the biggest height in the Upanisads and found its echo in the subsequent Puranas and the Tantras.

That is why even when a Hindu is worshipping either the Goddess Kali, or Ganesha or Rama, or Krishna, or Shiva, he always presumes that one Supreme God alone is worshipped under different forms and names.

Hindu religion recognises the system of castes. There are four castes in Hinduism viz. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. But this division is based on vocational tendencies rather than on birth. A person may be interested in the study of scriptures and that would make him a Brahmin ; a person may be interested in military activities, and that would make him a Kshatriya ; a person may be interested in business activities and that would make him a Vaishya ; and a person may be interested in the manual work of various kinds, and that would make him a Shudra. The Bhagavadgita has stated very categorically that the caste is the result of the mental traits and activities (guna karma vibhagashah) and does not depend on the birth of an individual. This is the genesis of the caste system. It is unfortunate that in the subsequent years this healthy and psychological division of society degenerated into an unintelligent and inhuman division of society into various castes based on births of the individuals. Even the castes developed various sub-castes. Hindu society has not been able to shake off this degenerating influence in the modern period. But there are indications that perhaps in the days to come this unenlightened division shall die out its natural death.

The Hindus have a firm faith in the principle of Karma. A person is free to choose any act and he is bound to suffer the consequences of such an act. There are three kinds of karmas viz. sanchita, kriyamana, and prarabdha. Sanchita karma signifies the effects that have become accumulated due to the past actions; kriyamana signifies the actions being done, and prarabdha implies the future that is being made due to the combined effects of the present and past actions. A person is the maker of his own destiny. If he does right actions, his future is bright ; but if he chooses wrong acts, he will have to experience bad consequences too. Nobody can break this supreme law.

Coupled with this faith in the law of karma comes a faith in the transmigration of soul. Soul is immortal. But a jīva is

required to change its garb in every birth in due accordance with the karmas. This series of births can stop only when one realizes the Supreme Truth.

The Hindus divided human life in four stages (ashramas) viz. brahmacharya, i.e. the period of discipline and education; grāhastha i.e. the life of an householder and active worker; vanaprastha, i.e. retreat for loosening of mundane bonds and attachments; and sannyasa viz. the life of a hermit. These stages bear equal importance. The first stage is necessary for building up the body and character and personality of an individual, the second stage is necessary for the prosperity and health of society, the third stage is necessary for giving the advantage of a person's capacities freely to the entire community and preparing a person for the old age; and the fourth stage is necessary for providing a tranquil and peaceful frame of mind to a person so that death shall not be so bad. Rabindranath Tagore has conveyed this idea in the following words: "When our sense organs weaken, we urge them to keep up their efforts. Even when our grip has relaxed we are reluctant to give up possession. We are not trained to recognise the inevitable as natural, and so cannot give up gracefully that which has to go, but needs must wait till it is snatched from us (Religion of Man)." The Hindu with a view to reconcile the demands of the spirit and the matter has placed four purusharthas or supreme ends of life. These are dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. Dharma implies an acceptance of the fact that a righteous conduct should be developed. Once this righteous conduct is developed, one can try to secure the objects of one's desire. It is implied that because of the religious background a person shall not be prepared to fulfil his wishes in a socially reprehensible manner. Money and satisfaction of desire, therefore, will not mislead a person. And ultimately one should be able to shake off one's attachment to the mundane objects and make one's mind free from cupidity with a view to attain liberation. Liberation is the supreme ideal, because unless this ideal is attained the agonies of lives

and births persist and make a person suffer in various ways. In the telling words of Bharthahari :

“What if you have secured the fountain-head of all desires; what if you have put your foot on the neck of your enemy, or by your good fortune gathered friends around you ? What, even, if you have succeeded in keeping mortal bodies alive for ages—*tatah kim-what then ?*” Hence the summum bonum of human life is liberation.

Hindus believe in the ultimate unity of mankind, nay, the entire creation. They condemn violence between man and man. They condemn the destruction of trees, and torturing or killing animals. They are so tolerant that they have accepted even rebels like Rishabha, the founder of Jainism and Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, who openly criticized and condemned Hindu ritualism, as incarnations of God and give them due reverence.

This leads us to a discussion of Hindu philosophy. There are six systems of Indian Philosophy, which bear the names of the Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya Yoga, Purva Mimamsa or Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa or the Vedanta. The Nyaya and Vaisheshika deal mainly with logical methods and the nature of the world respectively. The Nyaya system is a great exponent of logic. The Vaisheshika system is more interested in cosmology. According to this system the ultimate realities of the world are seven, viz., *dravya* (substance), *guna* (quality), *karma* (action), *samanya* (generality) *visesa* (particularity), *samavaya* (relation of inherence) and *abhava* (negation). The Nyaya and Vaisheshika are pluralists.

As against the pluralism of the Nyaya and Vaisheshika, the Samkhya system believes in dualism. According to this system two ultimate substances of the universe are *Prakriti* (matter) and *Purusha* (soul). It is believed by this system that the *Prakriti* consists of three *gunas*, viz., *sattva* (light, purity,

harmonious existence), rajas (energy, passion) and tamas (inertia, darkness). Yoga philosophy believes in the existence of God as against Samkhya which does not deny the existence of God but seems to be silent on the point. Otherwise Samkhya and Yoga are much similar in their approaches. Yoga, however, emphasizes the practice of yoga exercises which aim at the control of body and mind and prepares us to concentrate on the meditation of God.

The Purva Mimamsa is ritualistic and orthodox in nature. It concentrates on the wordy interpretation of the Vedas. But the Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta is highly speculative in nature. It advocates the identity of the soul and the Supreme. The most famous exponent of the Vedanta is Śankara though there are other Vedantists also like Ramanuja, Vallabha, Madhva, Nimbarka, etc., who do not agree with Śankara on this point. Śankara emphasized the cult of knowledge as an instrument of attaining liberation. But latter scholars of the Vedanta emphasized Bhakti or devotion as a means of attaining the Supreme. The cult of Bhakti became very popular in India. The saints played a very prominent role in popularizing it.

The Jainism and Buddhism also can be considered to be the products of Hinduism. These sects merely opposed certain tendencies of the Hindu religion. Otherwise there is much similarity between them and the Hindu religion. As we have already stated, Hinduism has accepted the founders of these sects as the incarnations of the Supreme. The fact is that Hinduism is all-comprehensive and very liberal. Its philosophy of the Absolute is so all-embracing that nothing but a melody of unity and metaphysical identity of the self and the Supreme is heard in its domain. Hinduism therefore very rationally accepts a progressive acceptance of the Final Truth "The worshippers of the Absolute are the highest in rank ; second to them are worshippers of the personal God ; then come the worshippers of the incarnations like Rama, Krishna, Buddha ; below them are those who worship ancestors, deities

and sages, and lowest of all are the worshippers of the petty forces and spirits."

"The deities of some men are in water (i.e. bathing-places), those of the more advanced are in the heavens, those of the children (in religion) are in images of wood and stone, but the sage finds his God in his deeper self."

"The man of action finds his God in fire, the man of feeling in the heart, and the feeble mind in the idol, but strong in spirit finds God everywhere."

The next end of human life is accumulation of wealth (artha). Man is not only spirit, he is body too, so long as he exists in this world ; and the body demands certain things ; to satisfy its demands we need bread, clothes, house and even certain luxuries at times. We should try to earn money so that we may satisfy these demands. Similarly, we have certain desires (kama), as we have mind too. We should try to satisfy our desires too to a legitimate extent. Satisfaction of our desires and earning of wealth must be obtained on the basis of our righteous conduct. One must not try to fulfil one's wants and desires in an unrighteous manner.

And still further we must try to seek liberation (moksha). Liberation is the most important state of individual's life. It is a state when soul attains purity, and all the miseries, pains and discomforts of life are destroyed for ever. Human life, however prosperous it may be freed from all kinds of unhappiness ordinarily. Problems of bodily health and mental happiness are numerous. No human life can escape them totally. Liberation is the state when the soul becomes totally free from all these problems for ever and experiences an eternal joy and bliss.

Thus individual life should begin from righteous conduct and should end in liberation.

But this does not mean that one should ignore or belittle

the importance of worldly life, wealth and force of human desires. What is needed is that the worldly life must be led in an enlightened manner and not blindly, otherwise the life of an individual as well as that of society will be downed in various problems and difficulties, and sanity of life shall be lost. Hinduism, therefore, insists on cultivation of these four ends of life. This will enable an individual the proper significance of every value.

Thus the true has a very sublime and rationally most evolved vision of truth which reaches a stage where the discord and disharmony lose their echo.

One more fact about Hinduism is worth noting. According to it there are four Purusharthas or the worthwhile ends of human life. They are Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Dharma implies righteous conduct. The very first duty of man is to understand the real nature of religion and morality and to dye one's whole life in its colour. Such a life is morally evolved. He has a firm faith in the immortality of soul and the law of Karma. He knows that one must not enjoy life selfishly, but must cultivate a spirit of enjoying life dispassionately and detachedly. This will help him in doing justice to others and minimise the chances of useless conflicts and wrangles that bring unhappiness to society and misery to the individuals. The very sense of religion is that one must not be satisfied only with a reading of scriptures or following prescribed code of conduct. Religion should inspire a person to transform his very life in the light of the supreme truth understood by him through reading and deep pondering. Hence cultivation of religion gives a balanced outlook to an individual and equips him with a set of proper values of life. The very first end of life therefore is to gain a religious attitude in a real sense of the term.

It must not be forgotten that according to Hinduism, the word Dharma stands for religion as well as duty. The very derivation of the term Dharma is that it is something which

sustains life of the individual and the life of human society alike.

Hinduism is therefore very comprehensive in character. Love for every creature that characterises Buddhism, absence of a spirit of harming anybody that is present in Jainism, love for all fellow beings that is the outstanding feature of Christianity, a sense of brotherliness that is the most prominent virtue accepted by Islam—in fact every good thing that is found in any religion is present in Hinduism in ample measure. To cap it all, it grants freedom to everybody to approach the Lord in the way he likes. It allows every seeker of truth to start from his own convenient and palatable way of worship, and then gradually to make progress and reach to the position which shall convince him about the fact that Truth is one, multiplicity is ultimately false, soul is the only ultimate reality, self is immortal and eternal and liberation is the ultimate ideal of human life. It is foolish to quarrel in the name of religion or for the sake of fleeting worldly pleasures. World is not to be dismissed as a dream. It is a reality, which disappears only when a person rises higher in the scale of spiritual vision. In fact the whole world is a God's play. The wise man is he who understands this fact and tries to pursue the worthwhile ends of life in a worthwhile way. The scriptures of Hinduism declare only this righteous conduct, moral conduct can alone lead mankind to victory (*yato dharmah tato jayah*). Let us consider the whole world as an embodiment of the Supreme Lord and give affection and respect to everything. A wise man does not accept the apparent diversity and can see underlying unity of the cosmos. Let us not forget that Hinduism is not a building built by any founder or prophet at a particular stage of society and at a particular time or age. It is a mighty tree that has grown spontaneously at a date not known to mankind and watered and reared by numerous men of vision. The shade of this mighty tree is so extensive and big that the entire mankind can take rest under it and taste its

luscious fruits. Hindu religion is therefore by nature so different from other religions that it appears like the vast ocean from which clouds of different opinions have been arisen in the different parts of the world and in which all these clouds of different thoughts return and merge to find their basic unity.

It is a matter of pity that some Western scholars have tried to underestimate the importance of this religion, because of the political slavery of India for a number of years. Moreover, one should never try to judge the nature of any religion from the conduct of its ordinary followers because a big bulk of followers of every religion is a slave of rites and rituals which are useful only for a beginner and may prove to be an obstacle for a really religious soul who wants to realize the Truth. Real nature of religion can be grasped only when one rises above the customs and rituals. Hinduism gives a person full liberty to start from mere ritualism ; but he must try to rise above ritualism in course of time so that he may ultimately reach the topmost rung of the ladder of spirituality. When a person reaches the top, he realizes the meaninglessness of ritualism and grasps the essential unity of creation.

If the world shall ever develop any world religion, it will be not different from Hinduism.

2

Buddhism

Buddhism is one of the most important religions of the world. It is a religion which is accepted practically by three fourth section of Asia. It will be therefore interesting and profitable for us to study the characteristic features of Buddhism.

Buddhism was founded by the Prince Siddharth of Kapilvastu. He came across certain disgusting sights like the plight of an old man, pitiable condition of a sick man, the carrying away of a dead body. These sights affected the heart and mind of Siddharth so much that he decided to renounce the world and find out the solution of these miseries that characterise human life.

Buddha had a unique background of the Upanisadic philosophy of India. Therefore first of all he tried to seek the truth by the process of meditation and performance of penances. He led a very tough ascetic life. But these things could not give him the truth he sought. However when once he was sitting under a banyan tree he experienced a flash of enlightenment. He felt freedom from the bonds of ignorance

and suffering from that day onward. Thereafter he devoted his entire life for the propagation of the truth he discovered for the welfare of humanity. He preached the way of enlightenment till the last breath of his life.

Buddha preached about many things. "He talked about morality, about Nirvana, about the evil, the vanity, and the sinfulness of desires, about the blessings of the abandonment of desire." But Buddha never talked about any God and avoided philosophical discussions and disputations cautiously and carefully. Buddha held the view that such discussions are useless. Theoretical wranglings have no utility at all. Our problem is to end misery. One who indulges in vain speculations on the soul and the world while he is writhing in pain behaves like the foolish man, with a poisonous arrow plunged into his body, whiling away time on the speculation regarding the origin, the maker and the thrower of the arrow, instead of pulling it out immediately without wasting any time whatsoever.

The basic thing about Buddhism is that according to it human life is evanescent or perishable in nature. It is full of suffering. Birth, decay, death characterise human life. The root cause of this suffering is craving. But for this passionate craving of the individual, the suffering would not be able to affect human life. "Everything, O Monks, is burning, and how is it burning? . . . It is burning with the fire of lust, the fire of anger, with the fire of ignorance; it is burning with the sorrow of birth, decay, grief, lamentations, suffering, dejection, and despair."

This human suffering however can be ended. That is, this suffering is not eternal and it is possible for an individual to escape this suffering if he makes a strenuous effort.

The way of ending this suffering is following faithfully the noble eight-fold path preached by Buddha. This path consists

of right views, right aspiration, right speech, right conduct, right mode of livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right rapture. These four things preached by Buddha are known as Four Noble Truths in Buddhism.

Buddha did not believe in any eternal soul. According to him what we call a soul or self is just a combination of five aggregates, viz., bodily organism, sensation, perception, pre-disposition, and consciousness. Just as a wheel is a combination of the hub, spokes, and rim, in the same way the self is the combination of five things mentioned hereinabove. These aggregates have been described as the 'skandhas'. When a person dies these elements are also destroyed. But one thing that is not destroyed is the effect of the karmas or actions. In fact the subsequent births become possible because of the effect of karmas. Though Buddha talked about the self as a mere aggregate of five elements, yet his theory of rebirth implies the existence of some eternal entity like the soul much like the Advaitic concept of the self. In fact Buddha was not against any metaphysical entities. He merely denied them because their theoretical speculations and discussions generally distracted the minds of common men from the fundamental problem of seeking salvation through an ethical life rather than by indulging in vain speculations.

The Buddhistic concept of Nirvana and Parinirvana are in keeping with the concepts of salvation prevalent in the domain of Indian Philosophy. Nirvana is the state attained by an enlightened soul in life, while Parinirvana is the state attained by an enlightened self after death. The term 'Nirvana' itself contains its negative as well as positive meanings. Negatively speaking, Nirvana implies emptiness and positively speaking, it implies a condition of freedom from misery and a state of joy. The etymological meaning of the term 'nirvana' is 'blown out'. Sometimes, therefore, the term is interpreted to mean the absence of all physical and mental states i.e. cessation of existence. However, positively speaking the term 'Nirvana' should be interpreted as meaning 'a state of serenity,

equanimity and passionless self-possession". It implies stoppage of rebirth and future misery and attainment of perfect peace in this life. Nagasena, a great teacher of Buddhism, tried to convey the idea of Nirvana metaphorically to Milinda (Greek King Menander) by stating that Nirvana is profound like an ocean, lofty like a mountain peak, sweet like honey etc. Ultimately he stated that the exact meaning of Nirvana cannot be expressed adequately through words. Nirvana is a matter of experience.

Buddha was always concerned with the practical problems of religion. He preached five precepts to the common man; abstaining from the destruction of life, i.e. observing the creed of non-violence, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from unchastity, abstaining from falsehood, and abstaining from strong drinks. He asked people to follow the middle path (*madhyama marga*) i.e. neither the path of stiffness and torture of body, nor the path of comforts and luxuries. He preached that just as *vina*, the instrument of music, can be played only when its strings are neither too much strung nor very loose, in the same way the music of life demands a pursuit of the middle path. This is the only sensible way of attaining nirvana.

An outstanding feature of Buddhism is a concept of universal affection and sweetness. "As a mother watcheth over her only child, so let your hearts and minds be filled with boundless love for all creatures, great and small." Buddha repeatedly declared, "If there be one of you who would wish to cherish me, let him go and cherish his sick comrade."

Buddha thus taught people to inculcate a spirit of universal affection and kindness to one and all. His kindness and sympathy did not exclude even the animals.

The process of liberation or nirvana that was preached by Buddha can be summed up in the following words:

“From birth comes suffering; thence faith in the Buddha, the Law and the Order; thence light-heartedness; thence zest; thence confidence; thence pleasure or contentment; thence concentration; thence the intuition of the truth.”

We thus find that Buddhism is essentially a religion full of high ethical tone and human understanding.

After the death of Buddha his followers developed differences on various points e.g. nature of the self, the Arhat's survival after death, whether Buddha was more than human being. Buddha had avoided a discussion about the metaphysical questions during his life-time. But this unwillingness on the part of Buddha to discuss such problems was interpreted differently by his followers. Some thought that Buddha was a thoroughgoing empiricist, and the others thought that Buddha simply pointed out the indescribable nature of the ultimate truth. The former were grouped under the school called the Hinayana, and the latter were described as the Mahayana. The followers of the Mahayana sect condemned Hinayana as elementary and undeveloped. The basic features of the Mahayana were (1) faith in the ideal of the Bodhisatva. According to this ideal the Buddha takes many births not only as human beings but even as animals to pave the path of liberation of people and beings out of compassion. These births of the Bodhisatva shall continue till every being is liberated.

(2) Second thing believed by the Mahayana is that there is a being called 'Amitabha' who is God of the followers of this path. This shows that the earlier atheistic attitude found in the followers of the Buddha was destroyed and a cult of faith in the Supreme in the form of Amitabha was started.

(3) The third outstanding feature of the cult of Mahayana is the prominence of metaphysical speculation. The Buddhist metaphysics and epistemology were developed to a great

extent by the followers of the Mahayana. The schools of Shunyavada and Vijnanvada are quite famous in the domain of Indian Philosophy.

(4) The Mahayana believes in the authority of Pali cannons called 'Pitakas' or baskets. The most prominent Pitakas are the tri-pitakas viz. the Vinaya Pitaka, the Sutta Pitaka, and Abhidhamma Pitaka.

Though Buddhism has disappeared from India to a great extent, it has spread to all over the Asia continent. The followers of the Hinayana Buddhism are found in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Combodia and Malay Archipelago; while the followers of the Mahayana are found in China, Tibet, Korea, and Japan. In India also Buddhism is getting some hold at present.

It is clear that Buddhism is one of the best religions that mankind has produced. From the standpoint of society that religion is the best that emphasizes human unity and brings about a sense of warm-hearted sympathy and fellow-feelings in the human hearts. Buddhism is the best religion from this point of view. It has the capacity of furthering international amity and peace in a most prominent manner. Moreover, it is free from usually obstruse and complex metaphysical speculation which do not appeal to the average man of the modern world. At the same time Buddhism is devoid of religious dogma and fanaticism that characterise certain other religions. From this point of view Buddhism can be said to have a great future.

3

Confucianism

Confucianism is the oldest and most important religion of China. According to Y.C. Young, "All Chinese are basically Confucianists." Strangely enough the word 'confucianism' is not a Chinese word; it is a word coined by the Catholic Missionaries. The Chinese equivalent to Confucianism is 'Ju-chio' which literally means 'followers of the teaching of Confucius.

Historically Confucius flourished much before the rise of Christ. His period is supposed to be from 551-479 B.C. He exercised tremendous influence on the minds of the Chinese people.

The cosmological principles of Confucianism are similar to the principles preached by the Sankhya theory of Indian Philosophy. According to the Confucianistic cosmology the theory propounded to explain the birth of the world is the Yin Yang theory. According to this theory there are two principles or chief substances which are co-eternal and are responsible for the birth of the universe. The first principle has been called LI. It is the psychic principle and is

associated with movement. It is the elan vital of the world. The other principle is CHI which can be called the material principle. The whole world is produced by the combination of LI and CHI. LI and CHI operate through two modes which have been called YIN and YANG. YIN is the negative mode and has been best described as dark, cold, passive, and female. YANG is the positive mode which is described as light, warm, active, and male in nature. These two modes operate through five agencies namely, water, fire, wood, metal, and soil. These agencies come into being because of the differing proportions of the constituents, viz., LI and CHI, e.g., water contains more Yin and less Yang.

The matter has been conceived by the theory as the great globe that comes into movement when it is informed by the psychic principle.

On the basis of the presence of the psychic principle, it is declared that all men are equal. But this equality does not mean that there is no difference in the beings. Though everything is equal and similar in its essential nature, the things develop differences due to the principle of CHI, the material substance. Now let us turn to the ethical philosophy of Confucianism. The basic dictum of Confucianism is that human nature is essentially good because it is a deposit of the Tao which is good. The evil that we find in the world is due to environment, education, lack of foresight etc. It is suggested that though human nature is essentially good because of LI, its combination with CHI produces evil. Therefore the basic question for ethical philosophy is to wipe out the influence of CHI, the material principle, and return to LI, the psychic principle. A man can become good, i.e., he can recover the principle of LI by the study of scriptures, meditation etc.

Confucianist theory of ethics conceives ethical life in five relations namely ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder-

brother-younger brother, and friend-friend. Our basic objective should be to become a good ruler-subject, father-son etc. That would ensure the success of our ethical life. Family is considered to be the unit of ethical life, because father-son, husband and wife, all these relations can fructify in that atmosphere. It is believed by a Confucianist that moral conduct is an endowment of Tao which is the principle of universal order; but at the same time it is always dependent on the individual. Therefore the conduct of the individual is not less important in making a piece of conduct moral or immoral.

The rites and rituals have also been given some importance in Confucianism. They are not supposed to be merely rules of etiquette; they are the ways of life that make a man moral. But besides these rites and rituals, poetry and music too have been given importance. "Poetry is what gives the first stimulus to character, ceremonial is what gives it stability; music is what brings it to full development." The underlying moral rule emanating from Confucianist thought is that no one should grudge any one else and one should be able to bestow affection on every being of this world.

Confucianism gives a prominent position to the worship of Shangti or heaven. Shangti has two meanings : (1) Ruler above, i.e., God; and (2) ancestors of the Shang dynasty. Thus the worship of Shangti means the worship of the Lords of Heaven and Earth. In course of time, however, Shangti worship crystallised in the form of personalised God. Shangti began to mean then a personal God who has a righteous object in mind in governing the world.

Another notable feature of Confucianism is its ancestor worship. During the feudal times the ancestor worship developed a queer form. A child of a dynasty was treated as a personator of the dead. However in course of time the relationship existing between the ancestors and the living beings became the relationship between the Lord and the

vassal. Therefore it was supposed that every person was duty-bound to respect the absolute command of the ancestors.

In order to give this custom formal basis many stories were invented. However, this practice of ancestor worship is fast declining in the modern period because of the phase of increasing industrialization that is overpowering China. But even now ancestor worship has its own significance in the form of property rights and material rights enjoyed by the individuals. Confucianism was influenced by Taoism. The cardinal principle of Taoism was that human nature is essentially good as it is the deposit of the Tao. This line of thinking gave to the Chinese the concept of One World and respect for humanity. There was no room for any petty outlook or narrow egotism in Confucianism as influenced by Taoism. In due course of time Confucianism was also influenced by Buddhism and adopted the method of meditation for the realization of LI, the principle of spirituality.

Confucianism was not restricted within the limits of China alone. Its influence was felt even in Korea, Japan, and adjoining nations. In the modern period some European thinkers have tried to place the philosophy of Confucianism in an appreciative manner. Among such thinkers the name of Leibnitz emerges out as very prominent. In his work he praised it as practical philosophy. He wrote: "So great is obedience of superiors among them, the respect of old age, the almost religious cult of ancestors, that a bad word against them is not heard and is regarded as patricide among us."

A revival of Confucianism was attempted by Chiang Kai-Shek at Nanchung in the form of New Life Movement. It aimed at the inculcation of four principles :

- (1) Regulated attitude Li
- (2) Right behaviour YI
- (3) Honesty in personal and social life, Lien

(4) Conscientiousness, Chin.

These four principles convey the spirit of Confucianism in the modern period.

The metaphysics of Confucianism is idealistic in tone. It believes in a regulating order which is given the name, Tion-Tao. It stands for a celestial ruler Shangti. It is supposed that happiness depends on the right adjustments to the universal order—an advice that can be found useful even by the people of the modern age.

Confucianism has been useful in maintaining the institutions like family and those others that resemble family. It has given these institutions a solid basis and a cohesion which has brought peace and happiness to the individual life.

4

Shintoism

Shintoism is a religion of Japan and is characterised by an intense nationalism. If we consider Nipponism a threat to the world peace, then we must examine Shintoism which is the main motivating force behind Nipponism.

Shintoism considers Emperor to be a super-natural entity, and therefore whatever is commanded by him is accepted as the final truth. The American Government, after the defeat of Japan in the second World War, has tried to undermine the authority of the Emperor and has introduced the will of people as the sole power behind the national government. But it must be added that despite the mighty efforts of the U.S.A. regime to undermine the importance of the Emperor, the Shinto could not be destroyed. Shintoism is, at its bottom, a virile faith. A set of aggressive feelings, and the multiplicity of gods, as well as the fear of the deity characterise Shintoism. It has some 800 deities within its fold. Though Shintoism is one religion, yet it should not be forgotten that Nature has endowed Japan from the point of view of its own constitution, with a natural talent of diversification and therefore Shintoism has also a number of subsects and forms.

Shinto religion has not less than hundred forms. Even the Japanese Buddhism has got as many as 56 forms. Thus we find that diversification is the biggest quality of Japan. We must make due note of this particular fact when we proceed to consider Shintoism.

Shintoism has two principal kinds :

- (1) State Shinto or National Shinto ; and
- (2) Sectarian Shinto or religious Shinto.

The State Shinto, as the very name implies, is that form of Shinto which is recognized and patronised by the State. It has 13 sects. In Japan religion was not considered apart from state control and therefore till 1945 we find that state Shinto was looked after by the bureau of shrines in the department of human affairs.

The Sectarian Shinto, on the other hand, was looked after by the bureau of religions in the department of education. The difference between National Shinto and Sectarian Shinto is that while the former gets its contribution from the state, the latter depends upon the voluntary contributions of its adherents and has a historical development at its back. Though we find certain difference in minor principles and practices of the different forms of Shinto, we find that they accept certain common grounds by mutual conference e.g. both believe in the immortality of the soul, guardianship of the nation by the eternal ancestral spirits, the efficacy of prayer and offering, the presence of Gods in shrines, community between the seen and the unseen world, a special manifestation of sacredness in the person of the emperor and, his biological connections in unbroken line of the ancestral Gods and a divinely ordained National destiny etc.

It is the peculiarity of Japan that every school becomes the agency for the propagation of Shinto doctrine in Japan and thus helps in its development directly or indirectly.

Shintoism is essentially an indigenous product of Japan.

But it was also influenced to some extent by Buddhism and Confucianism. Like other religions, Shintoism has the aspect of emotional faith in its sanctity. But its outstanding feature is its nationalistic character and its aggressive potency. Out of all the sects of Shinto, the sect called Tenri Kyo which means the teaching of heavenly reason is the most aggressive sect in its preachings and teachings. Curiously enough this sect was founded by a woman.

We can now proceed to study some of the features of National Shinto. Shinto etymologically means the way of Gods. In Japan it is called Komi No Michi wherein Komi means God, Michi means way or road. Thus etymologically Shinto stands for the principles of right beliefs and rituals relating to Komi. But Komi does not mean merely Gods ; it means something more than Gods, because even the mountain dragons and such other objects have been given the name Komi.

Shinto, therefore, can better be interpreted as the way of the holy because holiness is a concept which is indefinable in the domain of religion. A religion may not give any place to God in its system, but the concepts of sacred and profane do find a place therein. A writer has put the matter rightly when he writes, "Holiness is the great word in religion. It is even more essential than the notion of God. Real religion may exist without a definite conception of divinity ; but there is no real religion without a distinction between holy and profane." It may be added here that the concept of the komi changed with the passage of time and a change in the concept of culture. Komi, in the old past stood for dread or fear ; but now it has become associated with national life.

Thus Shintoism is the religion about the holy. It propagates the principles that are essential for making a man free from depravity and moral evil. But we should not think that this is the only thing preached by Shinto. "The picture

would be fairly drawn without the suggestions of the presence of higher and more universal forces that feed the sacred fire." Writes an author, "The enumeration of these would have to include the election of participation in approved sentiments and habits, emotional expansion arising out of dedications to the highest interests of the common life, the thrill of communion in great ceremonies, conviction of the supreme worth of causes that demand obedience to death ; pride in racial achievement, and finally, the sense of majesty and exaltation in the presence of the great personages and events of national life and in the contemplation of the peerless character of the all-powerful state." (Daniel Clarence Holtan).

Thus we find that Shintoism starting from a primitive belief has turned into the bulwark of nationalism. It has been rightly declared that "The fundamental character of the Japanese national structure lies in the fact that authority is vested not in a mere man but in a God revealed as man namely in a divine Emperor". Shinto therefore provides the people of Japan that religion which persuades every citizen of Japan to make any amount of sacrifice at the command of the Emperor who for him is god incarnate. The outstanding feature of Shinto is its historical character. Shinto religion is definitely not other worldly. It has helped Japan in bringing about a cohesion in the several islands in which Japan is distributed by Nature. In Japan the state has used every possible agencies like police law, education, religion etc. to control the minds and thoughts of people. Shintoism is the most powerful of all these human agencies. Though Shintoism is a blessing for Japan to some extent as it has brought about unity in diversity and has furthered the cause of emotional integrity of the people of Japan, yet objectively speaking Shintoism is a force that stands for war, reaction, prostitution of human intelligence and dignity and offers a potential threat to the unity, amity, and security of the world.

Even the influence of Buddhism and Confucianism has not been able to give Shintoism any universal outlook. Even now Shintoism is the main instrument of Japanese nationalism. Its effect is still very dominant. However, we shall like to presume that with the ever-increasing contact of Japan with other parts of the world and its participation in the deliberations of the UN coupled with the fact that the world has seen in the H-bombs and such other destructive weapons a great threat to its security and the development of H-bomb has actually brought Japan to the door of utter destruction shall be able to weed out blind nationalism from Shinto religion to a very great extent.

5

Taoism

Taoism is also an old religion of China. It has been described variously. "One Yin, one Yang is the Tao" ; That which is ordinarily called the Tao is not the real Tao anymore than a mere name is the real thing. As nameless. It is the origin of Heaven and Earth. As having a name It is the mother of all things."

According to other description of Tao It is the way of heavens in relation to the earth. It produces everything, but is beyond all, *i. e.*, it is creator of the world and immanent in it.

Tao has been described as the cosmic energy. 'Te' is conceived as activity ; it represents the physical and mental aspects of nature. Taoism is more than a religion ; it believes in a mystic experience wherein an individual is able to establish communion with Tao, the Supreme Principle.

According to Taoism our reason is incapable of understanding the Supreme Reality. Therefore books have no authority in Taoism. In fact books have been described as "dregs and remnants of the ancients."

This faith in mysticism differentiates Taoism from Confucianism which believes in some amount of ceremonialism and rituals. Taoism is of the opinion that when a person establishes rapport with Tao, he gets a new life and his old worldly nature is destroyed completely. Here is a statement of a Taoist named Yen-Hui. "The Yen-Hui who did not attain this state is I, Yen Hui. When I shall have attained this state, I shall be a Yen Hui who did not exist before."

Thus we find that it is the firm faith of Taoism that the mystic experience of Tao transforms individual life and gives it a new life. Therefore "the re-newing of the heart" is preached by the Taoists like Chuang Tzu. The teaching proceeds to proclaim.

"Unify your attention. Do not listen (to that perceived by) the ear, but listen (to that perceived by) the heart, but listen (to that perceived by) the soul (chi). That which you understand does not come by the ears, but by the heart. The spirit then should be empty and take hold of reality. The union with the Tao is not obtained except by emptiness. It is this emptiness which is the renewing of the heart." (Chung Tzu, Chap. 4)

"My heart became concentrated. My bones and my flesh were liquefied. I did not have any feeling of that to which my body was attached, on which my feet were placed." (Lien Tzu)

As is usual with the mystics, a Tao mystic experiences an enthralling experience of ecstasy in the union with the Tao, and for a person who has experienced that ecstasy the world becomes an appearance. Musings of a Chinese mystic tells us: "Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I was a man".

Tao is supposed to be the fountainhead of the ethical

traits embodied by a saintly man or a mystic soul. There is no ethical trait which we do not find in the Tao. Tao is impartial, orderly and humble entity. Pride is totally absent in the Tao, because it is believed that the biggest virtue is modesty. "The highest natural virtue is like water. The virtue of water is to benefit all beings and to occupy the place that all men hate." Tao, still further, is spontaneous in nature. It does not require any effort on its own part for activity because "to rule the empire without effort that is heavenly."

Taoism has a breath of vision and deprecates dogmatic attitude in every sphere of life. It attacked the moral and legal sanctions that were preached by Confucianism. At the same time Taoism was against imperialism and preached the ideal of a small state where people can attain their moral rights and discharge their duties adequately.

Taoism taught the ideal of contentment. It did not teach the ideal of strife and conflict because the latter was against the spirit of orderliness embodied in the form of the Tao.

The best period of Taoism was the period of Chin Shih Huang Ti the emperor who flourished in 221 B. C. and accepted Taoism. He was responsible for the propagation of this religious idea. The peculiarity of Taoism is that it does preach the idea of equality because a man is considered a small microcosm. Everything is already present in man but the realization of one's perfection comes only when man tries to move in the direction of that realisation. Taoism, as we have noted, has no place for any pettiness, and logically speaking it does not recognise any Gods. But in course of time Taoism accepted certain domestic Gods in its fold. These Gods were supposed to belong to three orders—the highest, middle, and the lowest. The highest God was Yu Huang Shangli who is the lord of gods like Indra of the Hindus. In the second category are some local gods, the

genii which were accepted by the common man ; and in the lowest grade were gods of rural China like Tai Shan, a favourite god of the Chinese agriculturists.

In course of time Taoism was also influenced by Buddhism. In fact Buddhism brought about a great transformation in the nature of Taoism. The Tao was changed into a personafied God and the change in demons was also effected. Mahayan Buddhism brought a sublimating effect and influence on Taoism. It gave to the people personal immortality which was supposed at one time merely the virtue of heavenly Gods. Similarly the theory of Karma as modified by Buddhism was also accepted by Taoism. As an average man was ignorant and incapable of grasping the supreme truth, a device of sin and virtue was devised to persuade people to accept the path of righteous actions. For example here is one statement that gives us an idea about the matter :

“For all great sins of men 12 years of life are but cut off ;
for small sins one hundred days.”

Still further, a sense of universal brotherhood and respect for non-violence became acceptable to Taoism because of the influence of Buddhism. There is one typical statement that enjoins observance of non-violence. “The good man, while walking and seeing at his feet a blade of living grass, lifts his feet and passes without treading upon it.”

In the modern period we find that Taoism had developed two schools ; one is called Northern School and the other is known as the Southern School. In the Northern school meditation, metaphysical speculation and practice of pranayama play important roles. But these factors are not so important in the Southern School. Taoism believes in Cosmic energy and it is thought that if people obey this energy they can get health, wealth, and prosperity, mental and material prosperity. The object of Taoism is to obtain

power over the self, men and nature and to bring about a synthetic unity in China. As Tao is the universal Energy, a sheng (saint) who identified himself with Tao can rise above the gods even. Perhaps the faith is the result of Hinayana Buddhism which gives utmost importance to saintly soul. It is supposed that the saint by his magical power (Te) can do anything.

Thus Chinese Taoism is an attempt to bring about a cultural unity and arouse a sense of confidence in the hearts of common people of China through Tao and Its magical power. It may be added that Taoism believes in a monistic philosophy and therefore for it every religion is only a means of controlling the relativities of existence and make a man an image of the Supreme Power.

6

Judaism

Judaism is the religion followed by the Jews. Jews have always been a small minority in the world ; but the smallness of number of Jews does not imply that Judaism is less significant than the other religions.

Judaism is marked by the fact that it has a vision of God and a programme of living in the light of that vision of the Godhead. It is a religion which depends entirely upon the followers i.e. if the Jews become extinct, Judaism shall also be destroyed along with them because the latter is less of orthodox rituals and more of a communion with the Godhead, a fact that differentiates it from other religions of the world.

Judaism is, moreover, deeply connected with the land of Palestine, and a Jew, wherever he may be, say in the U.S.A. or U.K. or India or any other nation of the world, he constantly longs to visit that land of Palestine and aspires even to reside there. Perhaps no other religion is bound with a particular piece of land as Judaism is. Like other religions, Judaism

has two aspects. The first aspect is the universal aspect. The universal aspect of Judaism consists of a set of ethical principles which are meant for the entire mankind and which do not bear any distinction between one nation and the other.

As distinct from this universal Judaism we find National Judaism which is dyed in the history and geography of Palestine and which is enshrined in the heart of the Jew community.

Judaism believes that God revealed His being and His will in the land of Israel and therefore they call him at times the God of Israel. But God has always been considered as the Father of mankind, creator of the universe, and an incarnation of Justice, Truth, Love and Mercy. That is why the Jews pray, "Blessed art Thou, Oh Lord, our God, King of the Universe." And still further he adds, "And Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and holy nation."

Jews, in order to make themselves worthy of devotion of the lofty God observe a special code called the Torah, written and oral law so that they may become worthy members of the world and worthy devotees of their Lord.

The peculiarity of Judaism is that therein we find some sort of universal concept of Godhead and an intention to lead nations away from moral delinquencies, idolatry, blasphemy, murder etc. in their own way. Judaism believes in an uncompromising monotheism. It has some recognition for Christianity and Islam which are accepted as "carrier of divine truth". But it stoutly opposes the Trinity of God, Christ, and Church. It however sees God's human form in Christ. Just a means for drawing people near God.

It should be noted that despite its intense feeling about monotheism, Judaism is free from any missionary zeal.

Judaism considers God as immanent in the world and

makes an attempt to impress His immanence through the agencies like prayer, precept and religious discipline. Thus the Sabbath, the Torah and Talmud which are the main pillars of Judaism prove sources of religious ecstasy.

As a matter of fact Judaism lacks formal theology. It is really speaking a path of mysticism. Its ultimate objective is to get a vision of the Godhead by entering into a communion with Him. God is the creator of the universe, the Father of mankind, the universal Ruler and Judge, merciful and long-suffering, because the Jews have suffered much at the hands of Christians and Mohammedans. To know God means for a Jew to experience soul-stirring emotional reactions in the heart of heart, to fill the depths of heart with divine experience. According to Judaism God is immanent and therefore even nature becomes spiritualised.

The Hebrew Bible tells us, "Hear, Oh Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One." In addition to this faith in One God, Judaism has faith in resurrection, divine relation of the written and oral law, and control of Providence by the Lord. The Talmud literature talks about God, His Kingdom, the election of Israel, revelation, prophecy, the Law, Holiness, Sin, Forgiveness, and the Messianic hope.

Lest one should think that Judaism is just another name for mysticism, it may be added that this is not a fact. Judaism has produced many thinkers and philosophers who tried to go deep into the mysteries of Godhead. They tried to examine proofs of God, the nature of His being, and His relation with the world. The name of Spinoza, a prominent philosopher, comes automatically to our mind when we talk about the philosophers of Judaism. These philosophers of Judaism got ample inspiration from Aristotelian thought and Neoplatonism. But it must be added that philosophy is not the main feature of Judaism. Its firm faith lies in the Prophecy of Moses. According to the Moses ben Maimon there are thirteen articles of faith accepted by the Jews. The list of

these articles of faith was prepared in 12th century. They are listed herein below :

1. Belief in the existence of God
2. Belief in His unity
3. Belief in His incorporeality
4. Belief in the eternity of God
5. Belief in the fact that worship is due to Him alone i.e. God alone is an object of worship
6. Belief in the Prophecy of Moses
7. Belief in the fact that Moses was the greatest of all prophets.
8. Faith in the Torah (written and oral law) and
9. Faith in the fact that Torah was revealed to Moses on Sinai
10. Belief in the reward and punishment in the present world and the world lying behind it
11. Faith in the coming of the Messiah
12. Faith in the resurrection of the dead.

These articles of faith have been reduced to verse and are daily sung by a Jew. This fact has actuated a Christian Saint to exclaim : "Behold, the Jews sing philosophy and chant theology." These articles of faith have found place in the Synagogue. Although we find the items of faith present in the Jewish religion it lacks dogmatism.

The most persistent faith found in the Jews is the belief in the coming of the Messiah, faith in the final triumph of Israel, and in the God of Zion. This concept reminds us about the Kalki incarnation of God believed by the Hindu religion. The Messiah, as conceived by Judaism, is not the Superman of Nietzsche. He is, on the other hand, a symbol of human perfection, an incarnation of moral perfection, and at the same time an expression of the hope that there shall be national redemption, the land of the Messiah shall be re-acquired. The cause of the Jews, who have suffered all along in the past as revealed by the pages of history shall

be upheld by the God and the glory that belongs to Judaism and Palestine shall be bestowed upon them.

In keeping with the noble idea about men, Judaism dismisses the theory of original sin. Man is by nature good. Judaism declares, "God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good." It is foolish, therefore, to find fault with God's creation.

The Hebrew Bible finds Pentateuch, Prophets, and Hagiographa, i.e., the world that lies beyond the present world most important concepts. Judaism does not believe that the death ends the entire life of the individual. It believes in a shadowy existence after death in other world for which they use the term 'sheol' in Hebrew. It is believed that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

Judaism is against renunciation of society and the world. Therefore the Jews never think about the other world and they constantly try to become practical in their lives. The Torah declares that the universe rests on the three pillars of Truth, Justice and peace and accordingly the Jews attach supreme importance to the triple principle of truth, justice, and peace in their lives.

The Jews also have a distinct approach towards worship. Their synagogue is not just a place of worship; it is a place of socialization; the Sabbath, festivals, the holy days—all these occupy their respective places in the system of worship. The daily prayer recited by the Jews tries to draw them nearer to God. God has been described as "God of our Fathers," "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob". In addition to these daily prayers the Jew also recites a double prayer 'Kaddish' which is meant for the arrival of a kingdom of God on earth as soon as possible. The Sabbath is a ceremony associated with justice and righteousness. It has been considered a very holy ceremony as is clear from the statement, "Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and followed

it." The multitude in the synagogue chants jointly "Come, my beloved, to meet the Sabbath bride Though last in creation, yet it was first in the design Divine Awake, awake, the light is come, arise awake, and shine forth. Awake, awake, chant a hymn, for the glory of the Lord is revealed upon thee."

Thus we find that the Sabbath is the symbol of hope and joy in the Jewish religion. Similarly other festivals, recognised by Judaism, give us an idea as to the buoyant and spiritualised attitude of the Jews towards Nature. For example, the festival of Passover, which is a Spring Festival is characterised by pastures. The Jewish New Year falls in the autumn season when the old leaves are discarded by the trees and the clothes of new leaves are worn by them. This New Year therefore is the year which symbolizes the dying of the old and the birth of the new. It signifies that the past life that we have held so far through error must be discarded and new life, a transformed life, must be begun.

Similarly the day of atonement signifies the confession of a devout heart. Whatever wrongs have been so far committed by a soul must be accepted because confession gives new glory to a human soul." On the Day of Atonement I will create you a new creation", declares Rabbi. Jewish religion is thus a religion of optimism. Just as it celebrates the festival of Passover, Festival of the First Fruits or Feast of Weeks, and the First of Tabernacles "the season of our rejoicing", it believes in the rejuvenation of human soul.

In the modern period Judaism is undergoing some changes due to an agitation called "Reform Judaism". It has been started in the modern period in Germany and U.S.A. It aims at the complete revision of the views. Its objective is to change everything that is not reasonable. However the old longing for the possession of the parent land of Palestine and a desire to serve entire humanity through Judaism find their

echoes even in Reform Judaism. The hope that has kindled the heart of the Jews for the last several centuries is rekindled in Reform Judaism when it is declared "Israel, the suffering Messiah of Centuries shall at the end of days become the triumphant Messiah of the nations."

We thus find that Judaism is replete with a crusading zeal and at the same time it has a sense of hope and confidence that aspires for "a new heaven and a new earth."

7

Eastern Orthodoxy

Christianity is perhaps the biggest religion of the world at present. Jesus Christ who founded the religion must not have dreamt that some day his teachings shall be accepted by a very large part of the world. It may be added that even though Christianity has been accepted as religion by a big portion of humanity all over the world, strangely enough its followers in most of the cases have consciously or unconsciously deviated from the cardinal principles of non-violence and fraternal feelings for human beings which were so eloquently preached by Jesus. But this departure from the main principles is common to all the religions. Therefore it will be better for us not to stop here to discuss the drawbacks of the followers of Christianity and straightway try to proceed to acquaint ourselves with the prominent features of the religion.

Christianity has been divided in two parts described as Roman Catholic Religion and Protestantism respectively. Catholicism itself has been still further subdivided into Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Catholic religion derives its authority from the Pope residing in Rome. Europe

is very vast and the authority of the Pope residing in Rome was not acceptable to all the Christians. As early as the 11th century the Eastern part of Europe began to interpret Christianity in its own specific way. This attempt came notably from Russians. They thought that the West has corrupted the nature of the church of Christ. It is therefore necessary to give that sanctity to the Christian Church which rightly belongs to it. According to the Eastern Orthodoxy which prevails mostly in the Russian part of Europe the church is a living organism of the God in which all our knowledge, salvation, love, joy, and blessing originate, grow, and fulfil their purpose. What is peculiar to the Eastern Orthodoxy is that it has got firm faith in the incarnate Christ. Christ himself has been considered the God Man in perfect ontological unity to the Supreme.

The sacraments have been understood as the divine mysteries and these sacraments are Baptism, Christianisation, penance, eucharist, holy orders, marriage and unction of the sick etc. These sacraments are not just certain rituals and ceremonies that we find associated practically with every religion, they are as a matter of fact the mysterious pathways through which we are drawn towards God. Similarly the theory of incarnation of Christ has been considered very significant. It is believed that in the carnation earthly manhood receives the perennial wisdom of God.

Eastern Orthodoxy aims at finding out the cure of the ailment of the present civilization. It therefore tries to give spiritual freedom and creativity to the Christ. This fact differentiates it from the other schools of Catholic religion which feel bound by the commands of the Bible and the Pope. Eastern Orthodoxy does not like imposition of any restriction or check on the spontaneous expression of the spirit. It moreover believes in the practical piety and substantial moral life. Any piety or righteousness which is kept within the bounds of theoretical knowledge has practically no utility for human life.

Religion is a practical endeavour directed at the transformation of individual life. If a man stops at the door of theoretical principles and fails to use them for effecting a change of his life, his attempt is vain and futile. Therefore Eastern Orthodoxy believes in a religion which really makes individual rich with righteousness and endows moral excellence on human conduct. The basic faith of Eastern Orthodoxy "mirrored in the collective organization of national life as found in Russia at present. It is believed that individual salvation is neither desirable nor a right attitude of religion. Individual salvation must be interlinked with the salvation of all." We perish individually, but we are saved collectively. This statement gives us a picture of the real spirit of the practical piety that permeates Eastern Orthodoxy.

Soviet Russia, as we find it today, is not the result of Russian ideology as is generally believed. Marxian ideology was accepted by Russia only as political programme. But Russia is definitely much bigger than its political programme. As a matter of fact at the root of the emergence of modern Russia lies the elements of Russian orthodoxy which are present in the life and culture of Russian people from the very beginning if we study the problem historically.

As we have already stated, Eastern Orthodoxy prefers to adopt a code of practical righteousness and aims at the moralisation of the individual life in a unique manner.

This cultural part of Russia made it possible for the Soviets to accept the Marxian theory readily because the core of the Marxian theory lies in the fact that no individual has got a right to prosper at the cost of other fellow citizens. Whenever we find this tendency we must curb it as the tendency stands for the factors of exploitation.

There was a brief intervening period in the history of modern Russia when the religious activities were stopped for the religion was considered to be the opium of the people.

But since 1943 Russian Church was restarted and the people were allowed to practice their religious pursuits unhindered. This has made it possible for the Russian people to imbibe the constructive features of Eastern Orthodoxy which aims at bringing the world together by establishing a sense of unity in human hearts and eradicate the forces of exploitation and human degradation so that a new mankind bristling with a warm-hearted feeling of fraternal feeling may emerge on earth.

8

Roman Catholicism

Christianity has been divided in two main sub-divisions, viz., Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Roman Catholicism starts with two presumptions. It believes that "the Kingdom of God is within". It is "the consciousness of membership in a society that, for a Catholic, integrates in a single living whole all the aspects of the 'kingdom of God, and the 'Body of Christ'." It is the faith of a Catholic "as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body as they are, form one body, so also it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free; and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many . . . God has set the members . . . in the body of Christ'.

Roman Catholicism has some peculiar beliefs. Firstly, it believes in an inspiration. For a Roman Catholic his conscience is a guidepost and not a subjective organ.

Secondly, a Roman Catholic believes in an illumination, a divine light which prompts him to follow the path of religion inspite of every difficulty.

Thirdly, Roman Catholicism has faith in the communion or fellowship with all those persons who accept the same way of life and truth, i.e., who belong to the same church.

Fourthly, to a Roman Catholic Church is a most important object. For him it is a prefiguring of the eternal and indefectible union of the souls with the ultimate source of all beings and truth.

Fifthly, the Roman Catholic takes his religion to be a walk of life. Whether it is domestic, educational, social, economical or political crisis, the advice of the Pope is always sought by the adherents of Roman Catholicism.

Contribution of the Pope even on the problems of war and peace has been of immense significance for the Roman Catholicism. Pope Benedict XV on 1st August 1917 gave "seven" pillars of peace to the world with a view to establish a reign of a just and lasting peace on the earth. They are force of right, curtailment of armaments, establishment of an agency of arbitration, acceptance of freedom for all and common enjoyment of the use of seas, condonation of the damage done, restitution of the territories occupied, and settlement of territorial problems in the light of "the general weal of the great human society." He taught that, "States and International Society are subject to the sovereignty of God and to the moral law."

In Roman Catholicism church occupies the supreme position. Church has a single visible head who is known as the Pope. A follower of Roman Catholic religion is so sure about the truth of his religion that he thinks and decides and endeavours to bring all the people within the fold of his own religion. This missionary zeal of the Roman Catholic is evident in the domains of Asia and South Africa. For Roman Catholic religion church is inseparably connected with the supernatural Holy Spirit. Church, in the words of the Bible, is commissioned by the divine redeemer.

Roman Catholic religion imparts a specific way of knowledge to its followers. The Popes who are supposed to be the agents for imparting this knowledge have invariably asserted their leadership to the world practically on every important topic. A Roman Catholic feels very grateful to the Jesus, Virgin Mother Mary, the saints and the holy Popes because of the supreme knowledge that they impart to him.

A Roman Catholic is not unaware of the kindness that characterises the path of human progress. Jesus had once declared that without kindness and charitable attitude one cannot realize God. Human nature has many weaknesses like selfishness, greed, avarice, lust, anger etc. which do not allow an individual to move in an unruffled manner on the path of spiritual progress.

In Roman Catholicism we find that due importance has been given to reason, faith, revelation, authority, and sacraments etc. Sometimes a question to the effect whether Christ was a man or a supernatural entity is raised. It is sometimes argued that Christ being a human being cannot be a perfectly divine entity. However, the Council of the Church held at Nicaea in 325 A.D. held, "One Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of light; very God of every god; begotten not made; being one substance with the Father" deserves our reverence. Similarly the objections that were raised as to the authority of the Pope were also ruled out. St. Augustine declared, "Only in the Catholic Church is the Holy Spirit received." Therefore the Pope has continued to occupy most important position in that religious order.

The Church similarly is supposed to be one with the life of the Holy Spirit. It has been declared, "The bond of our union with God; the father is Christ; as man He unites us with Himself, and as God He unites us to God." St. Augustine

declared that the Christ is the way that has to be followed by every Christian.

Subsequently a question was raised by Averroism which holds that God is responsible for culture and civilization of the world, "How man can be held responsible for his downfall?" The reply to the question was given by St. Thomas who declared "God freely chose to create active and free causes and he freely chose a way by which human nature could reach a destiny." This statement implies that human being has been given freedom of choice by God and therefore he is responsible for his actions.

St. Thomas held that man has a soul as well as an intellect. Intellect gives a man freedom of choice. Therefore we should always support a rule of law and liberty in our society.

As we have already stated church is a visible community in invisible communion with God according to the faith of a Roman Catholic. The fact that the church is a visible community indicates that it must have got some historical growth, and it did have such an historical growth, because it was influenced by Roman, Greek, and Hebrew culture. Hobbes had seen in Pope the 'ghosts' of Roman Emperors, and the modern church has been influenced by the synagogue. Sometimes the Catholics have been described as "spiritual semites". Even its humanism bears a primitive touch. Celtic influence was responsible for this humanistic content. Therefore we can safely conclude that the growth of the church right from its primitive stage to its medieval and modern form is a story of a progressive growth in which many influences have richly contributed.

Similarly when church is thought as the communion with God, it is given utmost significance for reaching to the highest level. Roman Catholicism is even now in an evolving process. In this context the significant words of Jesus must not be forgotten: "Many things yet I have to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of Truth

has come, he will teach you all truth . . . and the things that are to come he will declare to you." Does it not point to some distant culmination of progress of Roman Catholicism ?

Jesus had also declared that a true Christian must realize the truth that there is a unity underlying the universe. His words were : "... I in them and they in me : that they be perfected in unity." St. Paul also tried to underline this very unity when he taught, "One God and Father of all, who is above all and throughout all in us all." A true Christian ought to make an honest endeavour to discover this unity.

9

Protestantism

It is difficult to exactly describe the nature of Protestantism as it has been expressed in diverse manners. Ernst Troeltsch, the author of *Protestantism and Progress* has rightly stated, "If we are thinking of a purely historical definition of Protestantism, we soon recognise that for Protestantism as a whole, it cannot be immediately formulated."

It should be noted that Protestantism, is not an entirely new creation. It is merely an attempt to bring to light something that was neglected in Christianity but which was already present in the latter. Therefore Protestantism is an act of restoring to Christianity what was forgotten by its adherents.

The term Protestantism itself should be understood properly. It is not an attitude of dissent. Etymologically the term Protest in Protestantism means "to make solemn affirmation" in a positive manner. Its negative meaning is not significant.

Protestantism has two main forms, viz. (i) Classical Protestantism, (ii) Radical Protestantism.

Classical Protestantism is a tendency that emphasises the churchly systems and retains catholic sense, despite opposition to certain other aspects of Christianity. Radical Protestantism contains the elements of sectionalism. Classical Protestantism did not create any sect. It merely emphasized the right things in Christianity. For this purpose its adherents even opposed the authority of the Pope.

But this opposition was made in the name of Jesus Christ Himself. "It made its appeal from a religious hierarchy to Christ, from tradition to the Bible, from an ecclesiastical system to the living fellowship with the Spirit created at Pentecost."

The term Protestantism thus is apt in the sense that it revolted against the attitude of worshipping wrong things in the name of religion. It moreover prevailed upon people to become Christian in the right sense of the term.

Classical Protestantism claimed that the Reform movement started through Protestantism wanted merely to purify Christianity. They appealed to Jesus Christ Himself instead to any Pope for the vindication of their approach. For the protestants Christianity merely signified an individual relation to the soul to God.

Martin Luther was the first to raise his voice against what he thought to be un-Christian element in Christianity. Lutheran churches are found generally in Germany, the U.S.A., and the Scandinavian countries.

Luther wanted to assert that the Churches were merely concerned with the preaching of the Word of God. Churches are not concerned with any political or secular activities.

Calvinism or Reformed Christianity is still another tendency

of Protestantism. Calvin, a Frenchman, was responsible for this. For Luther what was material was the soul and its salvation ; for Calvin truth and a doctrine of God were more important. Religion is meant for the worship and service of God. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever." For Calvinism Church is "the foundation of the world" and "the holy community which in its life must demonstrate that God has created the world in order that it may be theatre of his glory."

Anglicanism guides the Church of England since the reign of Henry VIII. It has aspired to be "a mean between Papacy and Presbytery" in the words of T.S. Eliot. It has an intense sense of the Church and at the same time a sense of its own continuity with the Church of the Apostles.

Radical Protestants broke away gradually from the above mentioned churchly system of Protestantism. Baptists, the Congregationalists, Methodists, and the Quakers are some of the varieties of these Radical Protestants. Quakers or the Society of Friends right from the day of George Fox, the founder, gave importance to the reality of the inner light in the Christian soul as a source of spiritual upliftment. Methodists aim at living a really holy life. The Congregationalists emphasise the individual congregation as the ultimate ecclesiastical unit. The Baptists stand for the necessity of personal religious commitment before being baptised.

There are also The Humanist type of Radical Protestants. They desire to be the soul of culture. They take more initiative in the discovery of science or philosophy.

The Protestants hold the Bible as the Supreme Authority. The Bible at the same time is held to be the chief medium of our communion with God and the chief guide in the proper conduct of life.

It is believed that salvation can be obtained only through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is considered the sovereign

Lord of the Church and of the World. It is also believed that the concrete figure of Jesus Christ as He appears in the Gospels, is the normative standard for human life. And still further the Risen Christ is a perennial source of strength for action.

The substance of the Protestantism is "Let the Church be the Church".

10

Islam

Islam is one of the largest religions of the world. Nearly one-eighths of the world's population follows Islam.

Islam has been an outstanding religion because of two factors:

First factor is that Mohammed, who founded Islam was absolutely sure about his mission. He declared in unmistakably clear terms that whatever he stated was right and he was the last prophet of God to proclaim the divine truth to the world. This conviction is the part of the adherants' life so far as the religion of the Islam is concerned. Sometimes, this conviction degenerates in the form of fanaticism, but this fanaticism cannot be attributed to the original teachings of Mohammed and must be traced elsewhere.

The second thing that we find is that it is the firm conviction of the followers of Islam that the Quran is the revealed book and whatever has been stated in the Quran must be

accepted as the final truth. We also find in Islam a firm conviction to the effect that God is one and there is no God but Allah.

Another feature of Islam is its democratic line. According to M.N. Roy, Mohammedanism is the most democratic of all religions. This religion believes in the brotherhood of all the believers in Allah regardless of caste or padigry.

As we have already stated the Quran is the only scripture which is given supreme authority by the Mohammedans. It has been acclaimed by the adherents of Islam as God's miraculous proof of this truthful religion 'and the Quran itself tells us it is so', a guide to the pious, to believe in the unseen. The Mohammedans are, therefore, absolute believers in Quran. They try to seek guidance from the Quran for everything that they do and for every piece of behaviour in which they indulge. The outstanding mental trait of a follower of Islam is, therefore, his emphasis of faith (imān). Trust in Allah, the prophet, and the Quran, are the cardinal features of this faith.

Islam, as a matter of fact, is not so much a philosophy as a way of life. A Mohammedanic conduct, therefore, can be divided into two parts. In the first part we include the right act called 'ihson'. A follower of Islam has to behave in a way that will please Allah. He must never forget that Allah is looking at him.

The second part of the conduct includes compliance with five pillars, namely, profession of faith, alms-giving, fast, pilgrimage, and worship. These five elements do constitute the conduct of a true Mohammedan. A true Mohammedan firstly has got an implicit faith in the Allah, his prophet, and his Book and never doubts that the tenets of Islam can ever be wrong. The second thing that we find is a tendency of doing charities to others. A God's man must be a charitable man; and, therefore, he must share his pastures and pleasures with his fellow beings.

Similarly, fasting is supposed to be very essential for a Mohammedan. It makes the heart of an adherant of Islam free from blemishes and arouses in his heart and mind a longing for God.

Pilgrimage, in the same way, is considered a very necessary part of Islam. It is one of the ways of pleasing God and, therefore, every Mohammedan wishes and tries to undertake pilgrimages to the various holy places, notably Mecca.

And finally, a hearty worship of Allah is essential for a Mohammedan. He must kneel down and keep his face towards Mecca and with lifted hands pray to God for his mercy. Prayer is very essential in Islam. It is just like a stream of fresh water that cleanses the dirt of heart and makes it possible for the devotee to have the vision of the Allah.

It is a firm faith of Mohammedan that God is one and unique. There is no God except Allah. God is merciful, bountiful and helpful by nature.

In course of time Mohammedanism developed two tendencies: (1) First tendency went to the extent of stating that God is devoid of any description. Therefore, his real nature is unknowable. We cannot know him.

(2) The other tendency that came into being because of the Sufi influence, proclaimed that whatever we see in the world is full of God. This Sufism was no doubt influenced by Indian philosophy of the 'Advaita'.

A Mohammedan believes in God's 'Qada', according to which God reveals Himself before the Mohammedan, and he also believes in His Predestination (Quadar) according to which we find an unfolding of divine will in the individuals and everyday experience.

The principle of Predestination becomes with the passage

of time a principle of absolute determinism and finally it blossoms in the idea of 'Kismet' or fortune. Mohammedanism has got its own ethics and this ethical aspect is very splendid and magnificent. Mohammedanism believes in bountifulness, forbearance, hospitality magnanimity, patience, etc. and prevails upon an individual who accepts this creed to cultivate these tendencies or traits. Philanthropic endowment, 'waqf' occupies a prominent position in the ethically elevated life of a true Mohammedan.

Islam persuades its adherents for the cultivation of moral character 'khulk' and this moral character can be cultivated only through the cultivation of the delight of soul, exalted through liberty, tenderness, chastity, friendship and sociability. Other things that go against the nature of these qualities should be scrupulously avoided by an adherent of Islam.

Polygamy is an important feature of Mohammedan ethics. Contrary to the position held by other religions, Mohammedanism supports polygamy from the standpoint of religion. It is supposed that polygamy is helpful in curing mind's lustfulness.

Mohammedanism has developed certain unique characters according to the climates of nations in different countries of the world. For example, in Saudi Arabia Islam is quite fanatic; in Egypt, it has learnt to respect the past of that nation and its adherents have cultivated tendency of appreciating the scientific reforms in the light of the modern scientific age. In India, Islam has become more rationalistic due to the influence of 'Advaita' philosophy of the Hindus. The rise of Sufism in India bears a clear testimony to this fact. Even the mystic approach has been accepted by this creed of Sufism. The mystic path of union with the God through the pathway of affection that has been accepted by the Sufism is otherwise a fact which cannot be explained in any other manner. These changes that we find in the shades of Islam in

different nations are quite natural, because it is a patent fact of social psychology that norms and ideals get particular shapes due to the influence of the mores, customs, and traditions of the society.

Mohammedanism is divided into two classes, namely—Shias and Sunnis. The Shia sect of Islam is comparatively more tolerant, and is characterised by faith in Imam besides faith in God and Quran. According to Sunnis God is one and the Quran is the only revealed book. Mohammed, the prophet, is very merciful, that is why the message of Allah was revealed to us through the Quran. Thus the Sunni sect contains a monistic fervour.

Islam has never presented any secular ideal in the domain of politics. On the other hand the history records this fact that it has developed and strengthened the tendency of theocratic government in practically every nation where Islam became a prominent and potential power. The absolute ruler has been acclaimed as a commander of the faithful and consequently the citizens have always accepted him as the supreme power of the state without hesitation. This tendency is prominent even in the modern period in some of the nations like Pakistan, where the people are ready to proclaim Jihad against the followers of other religions at the instance of their rulers and are prepared to go to any extent in indulging in riotous behaviour in the name of Islam. But there are Muslim nations like Egypt, Turkey and Indonesia where people have developed a more tolerant view about other religions and are marching towards the ideal of secularism in their own way.

Though, by and large, Islam has exhibited certain intolerance towards other religions in history, as we have already stated, in the modern period it is developing some type of secular ideal too. This is but natural. Due to increasing amount of education and still further an increased amount of communication with the rest of the world the Islamic nations are sure to develop an ideal which shall be in consonance with

the spirit of modern age. When this will happen Islam shall be able to rise to the highest magnitude because it has already got that missionary zeal which transforms the life of its adherents. If this zeal gets due inspiration from the spirit of modern age, there cannot be any doubt about the immense contribution that Islam can make for making human life more prosperous and peaceful.

Having acquainted ourselves with the fundamentals of the various religions, it behoves us now to ponder over the important matter whether the old religions can be maintained in their old forms and whether we need to reshape our concepts about religion in a way that may be very apt and opportune in the modern period. That would lead us to think about what we may call "The Religion we Need". Let us therefore proceed forthwith to give our rational thinking to this important point.

11

Nature of Religion

Religion has been variously defined. Its interpretations are indeed multifarious and manifold. The Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary, edited by William Geddie, gives the meaning of the term religion as "belief in, recognition of, or an awakened sense of, a higher unseen controlling power or powers, with the emotion and morality connected therewith."

When one thinks about religion, generally a group of things like a temple, church, prayers, sermons, rituals etc. comes to one's mind. But it is a mistake to consider these things as constituting religion. Religions as we have seen in our study of Hinduism, Christianity, Islam etc. have different and divergent rituals and creeds. If these rituals and creeds are considered religion, then there cannot be any one religion at all. In fact, at times it becomes difficult for us to think that there can be any one religion at all. But the moment we think deeply as to why they are called religion, it becomes clear to us that there must be some common feature underlying the different creeds that makes them religion. Just as the perfume of a rose is different from the perfume of a lotus

flower, yet these perfumes have the common quality of affecting our nose in a pleasant manner, in the same way Hinduism or Islam or Christianity are called religion because each of them denotes a definite attitude towards life. Religion is therefore creative attitude towards life affecting one's conduct. In the past every society was separated because of difficulties of communication and conveyance. Therefore every society developed certain specific marks of distinction. Hence, every religion that developed in that society contained distinctive features. The result was that each religion was considered separate. Thus the difference found in every religion was due to the influence of that society living in isolation.

It is a common human folly that it tries to dwell more upon the ritualistic aspect of religion which is bound to be different due to the influence of the distinct social atmosphere, than on the real non-different element present in the religion. For example, the peculiar social and geographical conditions of Europe are different from the social and geographical condition of the Middle East and the social and geographical conditions of India. To what extent social and geographical conditions influence religion becomes clear when we find that even one religion for example Buddhism assumes distinctive character in Ceylon, Burma, Indo China, China, Korea and Japan. The envelope may be identical, but contents are different.

Even in a single nation one religion develops distinctive features in course of time, because social conditions change with the passage of time. For example, let us compare the Hinduism of the Vedic period with the Hinduism of the Gupta period, Moghul period and British period. There is nothing under the sun that does not change with the passage of time. And the outward form of religion is no exception to it.

If one goes by the outward form of religion, one shall

have to accept that there is nothing like one religion. We have only religions, and cannot talk legitimately about one religion at all. But despite differences of time and details, we talk about human history in the sense that the entire history is the history of human clan, we can talk in the same sense about the history of religion. It is to be noted that diversity existing amongst the individuals is far more wide-spread than the diversity existing in religions. Hence, it is more rational to dwell on the constitutive authentic element of religion, than on the diversity of the outward frames of religions.

It is very necessary to find out the real nature of religion because many conflicts and wars have been waged in the name of religion if we look into the pages of human history. European history tells us that a war lasting for one hundred years was fought between the followers of Islam and the followers of Christianity. Although Marx expresses the view that economic factor is the only significant factor behind all the conflicts and wars that have been described in history, our rational judgment tells us that so-called religion has been the sole moving factor behind innumerable wars and destructive battles. Even in our India we know that the very Indian nation was bifurcated into India and Pakistan on the basis of religion. Not only Indian nation was thus divided, many inhuman cruelties were perpetrated in the communal conflicts in the name of religion. Marx is therefore right when he states that religion is opium of the people.

But people have invariably confused the outward ritualism of religion with religion itself. It is very unfortunate that even otherwise intelligent thinkers like Marx and Engels fell a prey to the confusion. Even in the present age of intellectualism the confusion continues. Little effort is done to destroy the confusion. Even modern Communist writers commit the same mistake.

But one should not feel amazed at this. The Mahabharata has very aptly stated that the essential nature of religion, its

being, is hidden in a cave (dharmasya tatvam nihitam guhāyam). It cannot be perceived very easily. This statement of the Mahabharata is true even now. Ninety percent of the people while talking and fighting for religion have no clear idea about religion. It is evident from their behavior. A person who understands the real character of religion never behaves in the wild manner in which the so-called followers of religion behave. In fact these ignorant people trample over the spirit of religion and try to murder it because of their ignorance. They say that the path of hell is paved by 'good' intentions. But the things can be improved only if the real nature of religion is understood. There is no immortality without knowledge (rite jñanat na muktih), there is no proper religious conduct without an understanding of the real nature of religion.

And how can the real nature of religion be grasped? Only by making a sincere effort to understand it. Sincere effort in this direction means without being swayed by the opinion of the masses and without being influenced by the interpretations of priests, pandits and mullahs. An ordinary person is easily swayed by the popular notion of religion, because, firstly, he is lazy and does not like to consult those books and persons who have the capacity to expound real nature of religion; and he is, secondly, afraid to oppose the public opinion, whether right or wrong, because he thinks it advisable to be on good terms with his fellow beings. Any opposition of the public opinion is fraught with danger, because people have the tendency to be ruthless with their opponents. The examples of Socrates, Christ, Gandhi etc. are pointers in this direction. An ordinary person is mainly interested in leading the life in a smooth manner. He is primarily interested in furthering the interests of his relatives. He may at times talk about religion. But he is rarely serious about his love for religion. In fact, if religion is an obstacle in his temporal life, he shall like to discard it totally.

The best way of understanding religion is to peep into the etymological meaning of the term religion. Religion as a term, is derived from the verb 'religare' which means 'to bind'. Thus the term religion means something that binds. Understood logically, it is the process that binds the soul with the Supreme. Fundamentally therefore religion must be understood in this sense alone. It must prove a binding force. And when one binds oneself with the Supreme, one becomes as big as God. His personality becomes so enlarged that the whole cosmos becomes a small part of his Being.

The Sanskrit equivalent of religion is 'Dharma'. The term 'dharma' is derived from the root 'dhri' meaning 'to support'. Thus dharma is the supporting principle of one's being, and the existence of the universe. 'Dharma' is that principle which gives the quality of all-comprehensiveness, all-inclusive quality or ability to a self, because to give littleness or smallness is to destroy the real nature of the self. As the Bhagavad-gita tells us, one must feel that one is an indivisible whole, the world itself. This feeling of utmost largeness supports the soul. If the soul forgets this largeness nothing but agony, anguish and suffering shall be felt.

Why do we need religion? We need religion, dharma, because it gives the real lusture to our being, it presents the real dimension of our being, it gives the vision of our inherent immortality and vastness, unity and indivisibility, bliss and freedom from agonies and sufferings. If one is content with one's present lot, its suffering, agonies, anxieties etc., one need not go to the portals of religion. But man is inherently soul, whose very nature is bliss and knowledge. Hence there is a craving for regaining the lost divinity.

The outward rituals are easily mistaken for real nature, because their acceptance does not demand any serious thinking and can be followed by almost all, thus giving their followers

an internal confidence that the sanction of the whole community is on their side. Outward rituals, therefore, are blindly followed by the adherents of religion i.e., sectional religion. Any follower of different rituals is supposed to be an enemy or an undeveloped person, who cannot be tolerated. It is easy to rouse a mass frenzy against a person who does not subscribe to a particular set of religion. It is declared that the religion is in danger. Human rationality shall take some more time to ripen in the sense that it will take time to see that rational outlook is acceptable to a large majority of people. Our blind traditions do not allow us to go beyond them.

Let us take an example to see how rationality is not allowed to assert itself. The scientists all over the world are aware of the fact that nuclear weapons shall destroy not only their enemies, they shall destroy their own people too, because wind shall not make any distinction between one set of people and other set of people, and yet their traditional thinking forces them to feel that their nuclear weapons shall destroy their enemies alone. In the domain of religion, this irrational thinking is so strong that sometimes we wonder whether the so-called followers are serious about their religious declarations and their religious books. For example, if there is One God and everybody is His creation, how can one distinguish between a 'momin' (faithful follower) and a 'kafir' (a non-acceptor of Islam). Why there should be any cruelty or oppression over the non-believers at all? Lack of toleration is the sign of irreligion.

Religion is essentially a matter of conduct and behaviour. Mere declaring 'I follow religion' shall not make any person religious. His entire conduct must speak that he follows religion. Conduct expresses the reality present in one's mind. Religion consists in bringing about transformation in the total outlook of life. Moreover, this transformation would make a person's mind free from ego and the egoistic absurdities. So

long as the ego is present, a person cannot be said to be religious in the true sense of the term, because ego is the mark of irreligion, it is the sign of separateness from the Supreme, who is the sole Reality and the sole existence. The sense of ego hides the unity and oneness that is present in the Supreme. As the illustrious philosopher of India, Shankara, has stated, Ignorance (Maya) not only hides the real nature of Truth, it projects multiplicity and the manifoldness on the Truth, which is One in the sense that it is the only existent entity. If we call the Supreme one, we do not mean that there is some 'other' too. The term 'one' is an indication of our inability forced by language on us. That is why the Supreme has been called *advitiam* i.e. non-dual.

And if the Truth is nondual, 'I' is also not distinct from It. But the trouble with the term 'I' is that dialectically it implies 'you' or the other. That is why whosoever is swayed by the feeling of 'I', cannot avoid the existence of the other. And if once we posit others, the real nature of Truth slips away from our hands. Hence, religion is an attempt to discard the 'I' and to attain the nondual nature of Reality i.e. to feel the existence of real Truth alone. Every religious sect tries to present the sense of oneness in its followers. But it usually succeeds in helping a follower to see the unity of his co-religionists alone. Therefore one has to transcend the barriers of religious sects to attain the ultimate objective of religion.

As the natural growth is from plurality to duality and from duality to oneness, we find that rationally speaking those religions or sects are crude which believe in multiplicity of gods and those sects are comparatively higher which believe in the existence of duality of good and evil. But the highest or the only true religion believes only in the existence of one truth pervading the whole cosmos. Bernard Shaw is therefore right when he states that there is only one religion though there are a hundred versions of it. And when one comprehends that religion one exclaims 'I am That'. But here 'I' is not the petty physical self. Here the 'I' is greater than the

cosmos, the eternal Being, free from sorrows and pains of every description. When one rises to this type of religion, one does not attempt to know God through any proofs. Cosmological, teleological, ontological, moral and other proofs are only for those who have not understood religion, who have failed to grasp the essential nature of religion. Just as one does not need any proof for one's existence, in the same way one who has imbibed the real nature of religion does not need any proof for God, for God is non-different from his real Being.

Rightly sings Tennyson in his 'The Two Voices'

Moreover, something is or seems
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams
Of something felt, like something here;
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare.

Walt Whitman says the same thing

I believe in you, my soul.....
Loaf with me on the grass, loose the stop from your
throat;.....
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.
I mind how once we lay, such a transparent morning.
Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and
knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth.
And I know that the hand of God is the brother of my
own.
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers
and the women my sisters and lovers.
And that a kelson of the creation is love.

Swami vivekananda, who had realized Truth in his life rightly depicts the state of mind in the highest flight of religion: "There is no feeling of I, and yet the mind works, desireless,

free from restlessness, objectless, bodiless. Then the Truth shines in its full effulgence, and we know ourselves—for samadhi lies potential in us all—for what we truly are, free, immortal omnipotent, loosed from the finite, and its contrasts of good and evil altogether, and identical with the Atman or Universal Soul' (Raja Yoga)

After the attainment of religious quest, man becomes Universal Man. He feels "Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion." Distinctions of every kind and description are resolved into the experience of one truth.

Rumi therefore rightly states

What is to be done, O Muslims ? for I do not
recognize myself,
I am neither Christian nor Jew nor Gabr nor Muslim
I am not of the east, nor of the west,
nor of the land nor of the sea
I am not of nature's mist nor of the cycling heavens.
I am not of earth, nor of water, nor of air, nor of
fire.....
I am not of India, nor of China, nor of Bulgaria,
nor of Saq-sin.....

The Shvetashvatara Upanishad states.

Filled with Brahman are the things we see;
Filled with Brahman are the things we see not;
From out of Brahman floweth all that is;
From Brahman all—yet is He still the same.

The celebrated seer Yajnavalkya has given us a very vivid description of the state of realization :

"My beloved, let nothing I have said confuse you. But mediate well the truth that I have spoken.

"As long as there is duality, one hears the other, one smells the other, one speaks the other, one thinks of the other, one knows the other; but when for the illumined soul the all is dissolved in the Self, who is there to be seen by whom, who

is there to be smelt by whom, who is there to be heard by whom, who is there to be spoken by whom, who is there to be thought by whom, who is there to be known by whom? Ah, Maitreyi, my beloved, the Intelligence which reveals all—by what shall it be revealed? By whom shall the knower be known? The Self is described as not this, not this. It is incomprehensible, for it cannot be comprehended; undecaying, for it never decays; unattached, for it never attaches itself; unbound, for it is never bound. By whom, O my beloved, shall the Knower be known?"

The only way to know the Truth is to experience it. Experience is the sole test of the reality of Truth.

As the Bhagavadgita states, such a person does not see any fundamental diversity.

His heart is with Brahman
His eye in all things
Sees only Brahman
Equally present,
Knows his own Atman
In every creature,
And all creation
Within that Atman.

Such a person knows that he is immortal. Nothing can destroy him. As Emerson inspired by the Bhagavadgita states :

If the red slayer thinks he slays
Or if the slain think he is slain
They know not the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Rumi sang about soul's immortality in the following words.

I died as mineral and became a plant

I became animal once I died as plant
I died an animal and became man
Why should I then fear death ?
When was I less by dying ?
Once more shall I die as man
To become what man's mind doesn't contain

This immortality can come only by pursuing real and the only religion. To follow a sect that divides humanity is to be irreligious. Unreal religion can never satisfy soul's longing.

Myself when young die eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument
About it and about; but evermore
Came out by the same Door as in I went.

By continuous and constant attempt one can rise to the height of religious realization. Merely by visiting a temple, or a Mosque or a cathedral or anything else of the kind one cannot be religious. Religious attainment is possible only through personal effort and intelligence. Mass blindness cannot lead to the real objective of religion. Outward rituals may act as an incentive at times. But if they are taken as the be all and the end-all of religious life, one is lost for ever.

We can describe the gradual growth of religious realization in the following manner, gradually ascending to the top :

- (1) Participation in usual religious rituals of family and society like visiting a shrine, church etc. and listening to preaching.
- (2) Staying away from these rituals and giving more importance to reflection about Supreme Truth.
- (3) Concentration on the Truth discovered through self-contemplation.
- (4) Trying to lead a sublimated life in the light of the inner light.
- (5) Rising above selfishness even in the pursuit of worldly

life, even not caring for honour or dis-honour, reward or punishment, power or insignificance of social status.

- (6) Seeing God in every being, nay, everywhere and complete attachment to the Lord.

Our popular 'religion' is no religion at all. It has produced enough hatred, animosity and division in society. At the most it can be called a tribal religion in the sense that in the dim past of humanity it helped individuals to sink their individuality to some extent. But it preserved all the defects of undeveloped personality, e.g. anger, possessiveness, thinking ill of others. Tribal religion affords an opportunity to its adherents to create divisions in human society.

The opposite of tribal religion is rational religion, which produces spiritual temperament in individuals and unity in human society.

Tribal religion is always more popular, because it suits the undeveloped and uncultured temperament of man. Rational religion, which is the real religion, demands sublimation of usual human cravings and drives. Unfortunately, usually a priest gives a stimulation to tribal religion because it serves his mundane aspirations. An adherent of rational religion is tortured and crucified, because it offers a challenge to crude nature of man. The beast in man is angered at the thought of the elimination of beastliness in him. As the majority of mankind live at the level of beastliness alone, opposition to rational religion is invariably very strong and mad. The name of religion gives beastliness a beautiful envelope to hide all its crudity and nakedness. Marx is right in describing this type of religion as the opium of the people. Just as a person addicted to opium loses all sensibility and rational thinking, in the same manner a follower of tribal religion loses the capacity of thinking in a constructive way. Tribal religion feeds on crude credulity and blind faith of people. It is

inherited by man like property, and people quarrel for it as they quarrel for property, little realizing that real religion knows no barriers of sects, sex, colour, political party or anything else of the kind.

We cannot kill tribal religion, because it derives its strength from beastly aspect of human nature. But we can educate people so that they shall be able to make a distinction between tribal religion and rational religion. By and by, they shall be able to grasp the essential nature of rational religion and shall imbibe its spirit to overwhelm their being, their personality. If it is not done, a rational man shall have to exclaim like Lucretius *tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*—Such are the heights of wickedness to which men are driven by religion.

Rational religion enables a person to realize his immortality. How can death come to the immortal ? Rumi says

I died as mineral and became a plant
I became animal once I died as plant
I died as animal and became man
Why should I then fear death ?
When was I less by dying ?
Once more shall I die as man
To become what man's mind doesn't contain.

Real religious realization results in the experience of 'I am That' 'I am the Supreme', 'I am the Infinite'. The Gopis through intense devotion became themselves 'Krishna'. When the wall of ego is destroyed, what remains is infinity.

12

Necessity of Religion

It has to be accepted that nobody can do without some sort of religion. Just as everybody has some philosophy of life, in the same way everybody has some sort of religion. It does not mean that all concepts of religion are equally true just as it cannot be held that all concepts of philosophy are equally sound. In this context it will be worthwhile to mention certain tendencies which appear to have been accepted by some noted thinkers in place of religion.

Let us first of all take the view of Bertrand Russell. He has stated :

“My own view of religion is that of Lucretius. I regard it as a disease born of fear and as such a source of untold misery to the human race.” (Rationalist Press Association Annal, 1930). He is of the opinion that God or Divine Force or Spirit has been invented by the man when he finds himself unable to face the problems of life and the world before him. Religion is thus not a reality according to him, but a psychological prop to get rid of restlessness of mind.

Voltaire had declared centuries before Russell that if there is no God we shall have to invent one.

Russell is of the view that the universe is constituted by material atoms or energy. These atoms are quite indifferent to man, who is an accidental product of those atoms. Russell's view can be called Naturalistic Atheism. This view accordingly thinks that the ideal has no practical importance. It is based on imagination. The actual alone is important. This view reduces even art, literature and other cultural tendencies to the status of a useless object. The world, to these pessimists, appears to be without any value or significance. It is also absurd to think that religion is the product of fear. It is only the weak who seek support. But for the weak and the meek, it is the physical power which is the need, and not divine protector. Religion is based on selfless love for the Lord and not on fear. A lamb cannot love the lion, and a weak person cannot love the Lord. Only those who do not care for anything except for their love can be true followers of religion. Ultimately it is the love that counts and not anything else. Those persons who are stricken by fear cannot enjoy life. Instead of saying that people turn to religion out of fear, we should say that love destroys the sense of fear lurking in human heart. Naturalistic atheism therefore cannot be a substitute of religion. If one clings to it, one shall develop merely a spirit of pessimism and joylessness and an attitude of frozen indifference towards nature.

Sometimes it is said that man cannot know the ultimate Reality. Human intellect is too weak to know the Supreme. Therefore God does exist, but He is simply unknowable.

But this view too is not correct. How can we say that God cannot be known at all. He may not be known to us a present. He may be known afterwards and through other means too. God can be known through an intense internal

experience. Our intellect cannot ~~be said to~~ be absolutely incapable of knowing about God. It can know at least this much that God cannot be known through ordinary logic. A bird that flies in the distant skies can realize that the sky is too vast to be known through flight. That bird is certainly convinced about the vastness of the sky. The realization of the bird that has thus discovered the vastness of the sky is deeper than the knowledge of the bird who does not fly and remains attached to the earth under the thought that the sky is too vast.

Thus agnosticism is an illogical attitude of mind. It cannot be a substitute of religion.

Scepticism is also incapable of taking the place of religion. Scepticism has its own utility. It stimulates critical faculty of man. It demolishes the illogical standpoints. It destroys the unfounded faith. But its task is merely negative. It does not present any positive thing. But mind needs something positive to rest on. Scepticism therefore cannot serve any concrete purpose. One may doubt the existence of God, soul, and the proverb 'as you shall sow, so you shall reap'. But if God is destroyed, one needs His substitute, if religion is discarded, one needs its substitute. Here scepticism fails miserably.

We can therefore conclude that scepticism cannot be a substitute of religion.

Humanism is another trend of thought that is trying to supplant religion. It suits modern scientific mind to a great extent. It has no value for the temples, mosques, churches and the popular religious ceremonies which waste time and energy. Man is the measure of all things. One cannot see the poor and the lowly. It should be our task to uplift them, to make them happier. Service of mankind is the only true religion. We should try to attain human equality and fraternity. We should have value for ethics and morality as they

are needed to make human society happier. But we do not need any religion which has been responsible for superstition and human degradation. Humanism has its own bright point in the thought that it cares for the betterment of humanity by bringing about economic equality. But still it cannot be a good substitute of religion. Religion aims at spiritual advancement of the self. It lifts soul from the quagmire of material life to the highest plane of eternal spirit. Mere economic or material betterment cannot satisfy human soul which has got an innate urge to rise to the height of divinity. The real problem is the problem of transformation of human mind, recognition of real values of life. This can be done only by religion.

Humanism aims at secularization of man, while need is to inspire him to attain spiritual perfection. Man is not a finite being limited to the finite world. He is the spark of the Divine, the Infinite and the Absolute.

Humanism intends to lead mankind towards economic equality and sense of brotherhood. But this aim can be attained only when the help of religion is sought. Only religion can change human heart, and unless human heart changes, the world shall not change.

Even ethical insight cannot be obtained through humanism. Ethical life is not based on the perception of any golden mean, but on the perception of an integral good. Humanism is merely a thought. It lacks that faith and enthusiasm that mark the life of a religious person. There are things that can be done only by religion. For example, religion brings a sense of immortality and lifts man to the higher level of being. Can humanism do it? It can only try to bring about economic equality and betterment. But man has a craving for something more sublime than economic or worldly prosperity. Religion alone can satisfy this craving.

The fact is that dedicated service of humanity too can be promoted by religion. In fact, a lover of God loves the universe as he sees it as the manifestation of his Lord. No humanistic zeal bereft of religion can rise to that height. But what is still more important is the fact that religion brings redemption of spirit which cannot be attained through any other means.

There is still another tendency that is constantly trying to take the place of religion. It can be called authoritarianism. Usually in the gross form of religion the authority of the sacred book or priest or mullah is held in high esteem. This authority cannot be questioned by anybody. Ritualism of all sorts flourishes under this atmosphere. A large majority of people are satisfied only with the adherence to ritualism. Congregations, ceremonies, worshipping etc. fill enthusiasm in their hearts. They do not want to fathom the secrets of religion. For them the outer formalism alone constitutes religion. There are some persons who are assailed by many doubts about the nature of the self, universe and God. These people lack the capacity to indulge in a philosophical thinking process.

Authoritarianism is an enemy of reason and generates superstition. It misguides the simple folk and is responsible for all those absurdities which have been committed in the pious name of religion. Ritualism and ceremonies serve some purpose in the beginning. But one has to go beyond them if one intends to grasp the real significance of religion. Unfortunately a large number of adherents of religion refuse to grow. It is like a person trying to put on the same clothes that he wore when he was a child. It is not faith but dogmatism that prompts them to do so. Dogmatism is always irrational and hard to dispel. Real religion can never be based on dogmatism.

We thus find that there are some prominent tendencies mentioned hereinabove that divert the attention of a person

from real religion and persuade a person to accept them dogmatically as religion. Great caution is needed therefore in finding out authentic religion. I am of the opinion that Bhāgavata dharma or Divine Religion is the real religion that we need.

The Bhagavata Dharma

The Bhāgavata Dharma is a very old religion. It is as old as real religion itself. When I talk about the Bhāgavata Dharma, I do not talk about the religion that is based on the Pancaratra or any book of formal worship. My Bhāgavata Dharma is entirely rational and constructive. The exposition of this religion is found in the Bhagavadgītā and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Of course, every work can be interpreted variously. These classic works too may be given interpretation that shall be entirely different from my interpretation. But I am sure that my exposition of the religion is founded on enlightened rationality. It is moreover relevant to the modern world. Hence, every lover of rational thought shall accept it if he is not swayed by any prejudice, dogmatism, lack of reason or anything else of the kind.

Characteristic features of Bhāgavata Dharma

It satisfies reason and pleases the heart:

There are very few institutionalized religions (sects) which can be acceptable to both reason and heart. Generally a picture of heaven and hell is presented. It is stated that God is very powerful. He gives paradise to his devotees. And that paradise is a place where every kind of merriment is available. This type of God cannot be acceptable to our mature rationality. The Indian materialists, the Charvaks, have that is why pleaded that if paradise is a place of pleasures, we should not care for it, because it will be attained as per the faith of its believers only when one is going to do moral deeds for a number of years or even throughout the life. Even then, may be the faith is not founded on solid base and it is possible paradise happens to be a fictitious place. That will mean that the life has been wasted due to an illusion. It is therefore wiser to enjoy worldly pleasures in this very life, because these pleasures are certain.

One has to accept a nobler concept of Godhead, if one intends to satisfy one's rationality. The nobler concept of God will be that He is the treasure-house of all virtues, beauty, strength and truth. He is the creator of the universe, sustainer of the universe and the destroyer of the universe. Although everything is derived from Him, He is not exhausted in this universe. He is much larger than this world.

But when this concept of the Godhead is advanced, people argue that this world is full of evils. Oppression, crimes, suffering of the good people and such other things abound in this world. If God has created this world, either He is cruel and derives abnormal joy in the sufferings of people, or He is helpless and cannot produce a better world. A helpless God or a cruel God is not real God who can deserve our worship and offerings.

Therefore some thinkers go still further in the domain of spiritual thought. According to them the ultimate Reality is indeterminate, formless, Truth. The world is the creation of maya. In fact there is no world at all. It is our own wrong thinking produced due to our ignorance that is responsible for our experience of the multiplicity. It is all a case of delusion. The moment we are able to see the truth, the darkness of ignorance is dissolved into bright light and the ultimate Reality shines before our eyes like the Sun. Liberation consists in obtaining the knowledge of our original nature as the Ultimate Reality. There is no God except our own Self. There is no world except our own Self.

It is this last concept of Reality that is logical and therefore true.

But one should not expect that everybody has got the competence to understand the most logical concept of the Godhead. That is why Shankara was criticised by many subsequent thinkers. In fact Indian Philosophy has always believed in the Adhikari Bheda or an hierarchy of competence of

understanding the highest Truth. One cannot expect a student of first standard to understand the philosophical discourse on the Bhagavadgita.

Hence, there is an hierarchy of gods. The lowest in intelligence thinks that the ghost is god, because he can harm any person. Any reasonable work of religion must have a place for all these gods. It is not meant that all concepts of gods are equally true. What is meant is that we must do justice with psychology of persons. Man gradually rises to the highest rung of the ladder of truth. By and by, a person can come to the position of understanding the logically most satisfying concept of Godhead.

The Bhāgavata Dharma is the only religion that takes due note of this fact and accommodates every concept of Godhead. For example, let us pay our attention to the following verse of the Gītā :

“The faith of each is shaped according to his own mental constitution. Faith constitutes the very being of man ; therefore, whatever the nature of his faith, that verily he is.” (XVII—3)

The Bhāgavata states :

“It is described by the learned persons in accordance with their own interest or tendency”
(Vadanti caitat kavayo yatharucam)

The Rīgveda had declared much earlier that One Supreme Truth has been described by persons in various ways (ekam sad viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti).

The Bhāgavata very emphatically declares that one Reality alone has been given the names of Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān (1—2—11).

An idol worship too is quite desirable, because one needs some prop for meditation in the beginning. It is very difficult

for a beginner to think about the highest concept of Truth at the very outset. One has to begin from some image.

What is an idol ? It is only an image of the Lord based on some faith and sentiment. As the Bhāgavata states, one should worship an image till one is able to see the Brahman in the universe. (3-29-25) The Bhāgavata goes to the extent of mentioning eight types of idols in this connection. (11-27-12).

But idol is not the self. It is but a "symbol of God. God is definitely not limited in that idol alone, although He is present in the idol too as He is present everywhere else. (na pratike na hi sah—Vedānta Darśana).

But this is just a beginning. The man of real knowledge sees his Lord in his heart, in his own self, and not in the idol. Idol is meant for the persons who lack knowledge.

(śīvamātmani paśyanti pratimāsu na yoginaḥ.
ajñānam bhāvanārthaya pratimāḥ patikalpitāḥ.

—Jābāladarśanopaniṣad, 4-59)

Agnau kroyāvatām devo hṛdi devo maṇṣinām.
pratimā svalpabuddhīnām yoginām hṛdaye hariḥ.

Nṛsimhapurāṇa, 62-5)

The Bhāgavata states that that person is a fool who neglects the God pervading the universe, and is engaged merely in an idol-worship. (4-29-22).

There is no prevailing religion in the world which does so much justice to human psychology and the principle of gradual evolution of religious consciousness, as the Bhāgavata Dharma. From the lowest concept of god to the highest concept of the Absolute is a big journey for a lover of truth. For such a lover of truth there cannot be a religion as helpful and lofty as the Bhāgavata Dharma.

The Bhagavadgītā declares "The faith of each is shaped to his own mental constitution. Faith constitutes the very

being of man ; therefore whatever the nature of his faith, that verily he is."

"Men of a Sātvika disposition worship the gods ; those of a Rājasika disposition worship Yakṣas and Rākṣasas (demons) ; while others of a Tāmasika disposition worship spirits and ghosts." (XVII-3, 4)

Our modern world needs an accommodating attitude in the domain of religion, because modern diplomacy is so crooked that it can exploit religious sentiments for generating conflicts in nations to serve their petty ends. The Bhāgavata concept of God alone can persuade people to maintain a rational view-point and defeat the machinations of mischief-mongers. Let us begin from any concept of god. Even if it is the crudest, we need not worry. If we follow the Bhāgavata Dharma, we can hope to rise to the highest concept of divinity sooner or later. Gandhi rightly declares :

"Religion of our conception, being thus imperfect, is always subject to a process of evolution and reinterpretation. Progress towards Truth, towards God is possible only because of such evolution." (Young India, 31st July, 1924, p. 254).

Still another remarkable feature of the Bhāgavata Dharma is that it has no place for any ritualism. No priest is required, no middleman is needed. One has direct relation with the Lord. The only thing that is needed is an intense love for the Lord. (paramapremarūpā Nārada). What is required is the supreme longing for Him. (sa parānuraktiśvare Śaṇḍilya). This love is for love's sake. (nirhetuka) The Bhāgavata extols this motiveless devotion for God. (ahetukavyavahita yā bhaktiḥ puruṣottame). No prescribed observance of any type is required. The Bhagavadgītā states :

“Whosoever offers to Me with love a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, I appear in person before that disinterested devotee of purified intellect, and delightfully partake of that article offered by him with love.” (IX—26)

“I abide not in heaven nor in the hearts of yogis : I dwell where My devotees sing My glory” (nāhaṁ vasāmi vaikunṭhe, yoginām hṛdaye na ca madbhaktā yatra gāyanti tatra tistāmi nārada).

The Bhāgavata declares the view of the Lord :

“Uddhava, you leave aside the Vedic prescriptions and the scriptural enjoinders. You only come to Me with a dedicated heart. The moment you come to Me in this way, you attain Me, the place of no fear of any type.”

(tasmātmamuddhavotsrajya codanām praticodanām pravṛttim ca nivṛttim ca śrotavyam śrutameva ca. māmekameva śaraṇamatmānām sarvadehinām yahi sarvātmabhāvena yasyasi hyakutobhayam.)

The Bhāgavata Dharma needs a spirit of extreme dedication and nothing else. Neither riches, nor learning or any procedural observances are needed. The Lord declares “Be mentally attached to me constantly.” (maccittah satatam bhava.)

Third characteristic feature of the Bhāgavata Dharma is a synthesis of the spiritual and the mundane activities. A lover of the Bhāgavata Dharma need not renounce the world and sit in a corner or forest to meditate on the nature of pure self.

The Bhāgavata Dharma prescribes the ‘pravṛtti mārga’ or the path of action. The Śānti Parva of the Mahābhārata tells us that this Dharma is very old and believes in the way of remaining in this world and performing duties, (nārāyaṇaḥ paro dharmo punaravṛtti durlabhah pravṛttilakṣaṇaścaiva dharmo nārāyanatmākah.)

The Bhāgavata believes in doing all air duties in a non-attached manner. If one leaves action, then the social cause shall receive a setback. Unworthy persons shall make society still more wretched. Action is God. How can one leave it? But one must not be swayed by a desire of fruits or selfish motives while performing any action. The entire life of Śrīkṛṣṇa was a living example of this creed,

pravṛttilakṣaṇam dharmam ṛsir nārāyaṇo 'bravit.

A religion that advocates doing right duties in the world is the Bhāgavata Dharma. A person of real knowledge never abandons worldly duties. (jñānavān eva karmāṇi kurvan sarvatra sidhyati — Mahābhārata, Śāntiparva.)

It is foolish to think that action binds a person. How can action bind a person, if it is done without any desire of the fruit? It is the desire or motive lying behind action that binds a person. nissango muktabandhanaḥ. A person not bound by any desire is always free.

What is the object of doing a work, if one is free from any selfish desire? It is doing lokasaṃgraha or welfare of humanity. He is not a liberated soul who abandons activity. He is a liberated soul who performs his duties not for his sake, but for the sake of the betterment of the world.

Man's real progress lies in his inward growth. Wherever one may be, one can make progress in an inward way. This progress may not be perceptible to an ordinary man, but the person who grows inwardly can understand very well whether he is shaking off the bonds of attachment or not. A perfect man does not need any outside testimony. He does not need the certificate from any teacher or preacher. He must realize his position of growth inwardly.

What is the mark of an inward growth? Rejection and elimination of ego. It is the ego which draws the world inside a man. If the ego is eased, there is nothing which will make a man a slave of the world and its objects. That is why the Bhāgavata Dharma aims at the elimination of the ego

through *ātma-nivedana* i.e. complete dedication to the Lord. When the dedication is complete, he sees nothing but his Lord, hears nothing but his Lord, obeys nothing but his Lord. He sings :

“I am a flute
 Fill it with thy breath
 And sing the song
 You like most, my Lord.
 I have nothing to desire,
 Have nothing to quarrel about ;
 Have nothing to retain,
 Have nothing to gain.
 The life that thrives in this body is Yours
 The tongue that speaks is Yours
 Ears that hear are Yours.
 My ‘I’ has merged in You.
 And now, You alone exist, my Lord.”

Such a soul does nothing, *na kicit karoti*. He is just an instrument of his Lord, *nimittamātram*. Therefore he is unaffected, even though he appears to be acting, *kurvann api na lipyate*.

This action is done in due accordance with one's nature (*svabhāva*) and outward social status (*svadharma*). A person steeped in the spirit of the *Bhāgavata Dharma* is thus a great asset to the world and society. Not only has he realized his true self, he helps the world in attaining internal and external growth.

The *Bhagavadgītā* states :

“As the unlearned act from attachment to their work, so should the learned also but without any attachment, with the desire of maintaining the world-order.” (III. 25) Not only this. It is asserted that “all actions without any exception culminate in knowledge.” (Ibid, IV-33)

Lord Kṛṣṇa gives His own example.

“Since I have no craving for the fruit of actions do not contaminate me” (IV. 14)

4 The Bhagavata Dharma not only offers a synthesis between the spiritual and the mundane, it also offers a synthesis between devotion and knowledge.

A man needs both heart and mind. It is unfortunate that a man of Jñāna Mārga neglects devotion, and a man of Bhakti Mārga belittles the value of knowledge. The Bhāgavata Dharma advocates a synthesis of devotion with knowledge. The Lord declares in the Bhagavadgītā that He loves a Jñānī Bhakti most. (VII-17) There is nothing as holy as knowledge. (IV-38) and a person of faith and devotion is granted knowledge by the Lord. (IV-39) The Lord is the knowledge of the men of knowledge. (X-38)

Even logically speaking a synthesis between devotion and knowledge is desirable. Eyes must see the direction of our movement. Our energy without proper direction can lend us into trouble. This generally happens in the case of ‘popular religion’. Common man lacks the proper knowledge, and therefore, he is very often misled by the priests, Mullahs and Pandits. Blind faith is as bad as verbal knowledge not transformed into action. The Bhāgavata Dharma is rooted into enlightened faith. That is why it cannot lose sight of its right destination.

The Bhāgavata states in the panegyric by Akrura :

“Those persons too who worship other gods and think them to be different from You, really speaking, worship You alone, because you alone exist in the form of different gods, and You alone are the Lord of everything.

Just as many rivers spring from the mountains and filled with rain-water ultimately reach the sea, in the same way al

the methods of worship ultimately reach you alone (if pursued properly).

(sarva eva yajanti tvām sarvadevamayeśvaram
ye'pyanyadevatābhaktaḥ ydyapyanyadhiyah prabho.
yathādriprabhavā nadyaḥ parjanyaḥ pūrītaḥ prabho.
viśanti sarvataḥ sindhum tadvattām gatayo ntataḥ)

The only yard-stick of real religion is its breadth of vision and its refusal to be sectarian in any way. The Bhāgavata Dharma alone exhibits this tendency in ample measure.

4 Next characteristic feature of the Bhāgavata Dharma is its utter simplicity. Spirit of authentic religion suffers mostly because by and by religion is made more and more tough through an elaborate methodology and ritualism. Rigidity in the form of worship takes the place of warm-hearted feelings for the Lord. Mantras, ceremonialism, specific way of worship, expensive pilgrimages, costly buildings of worship etc. assume utmost importance in place of an intense affection for the Lord. The Bhāgavata Dharma states that the only thing needed is an intense love for the Lord. Everything else is useless.

Prahlada states : |

“Riches, noble birth, beauty, austerity, learning, brightness, influence, strength, activeness, intelligence, Yoga-practices all these things fail to satisfy God. But if one has real devotion for Him, He is pleased. An illustration of this fact is the Lord of elephants.”

(manye dhanabhijanarūpatapaḥ śrutaujaśtejaḥ
prabhāvalapauruṣabuddhiyogaḥ. nārādhānaya
hi bhavaṁti parasya puṁso bhaktyā tutoṣa
bhagavangajayūthapāya.)

Even a Cāṇḍāla (i.e. socially speaking the humblest person) is better than a Brāhmaṇa, if the former has real affection for

the Lord while the latter although versed in theoretical knowledge and socially enjoying much better status and authority, is lacking in devotion.

The Bhagavadgītā states :

“Neither by study of Devas, nor by penance, nor by charity, nor by ritual can I be seen in this form.” (XI-53) God can be realized only through single-minded devotion. (XI-54) Even the lowest people can realize God through the simplest way of devotion. (IX-32). One can worship God in any of the ways of his liking. One may love the Lord, as a friend or as a beloved or as the Master.

If one asks the question : “What is the method of devotion ?” The only answer will be that there is no such method. The only requisite is real love for the Lord.

If one loves the Lord through single-minded devotion, one can develop the highest type of knowledge too.

(Īśvarānugrahādeva pūṁsāmadvaiata vāsanā).

The Gopikas knew nothing about scriptures or Vedic commandments. They did not know any rituals. They just loved Śrīkṛṣṇa. (yatha vṛjagopikānām-Nārada Bhakti Sūtra, 21). Knowledge is simply an aid to devotion at times. Just as one cannot satisfy one's hunger merely by a knowledge of food, or just as one cannot gain a king's favour merely by gaining some knowledge about the king, in a similar way knowledge about God is not sufficient. God can be realized only through sincere devotion or attachment.

(rājagrha bhōjanādiṣu tathaiva dṛṣṭatvāt. na tena
rājaparitoṣaḥ kṣudhāsāntirvā—Nārada Bhakti
Sūtra 31/32)

Devotion is no monopoly of any cultured man. It is open for all. No importance is attached to caste, learning, beauty, birth, riches and rituals.

(*nāsti teṣu jātividyārūpakula dhana kriyādi bhedaḥ-Nārada Bhakti Sūtra, 72*)

An intense and enclusive love for God can lead to the highest rung of spiritual attainment. Both knowledge and ritualism become equally unnecessary there. In the words of Vivekananda : "Nothing remains to bind him or fetter his freedom. A ship, all of a sudden, comes near a magnetic rock, and its iron bolts and bars are all attracted and drawn out, and the planks get loosened and freely float on the water. Divine grace thus loosens the binding bolts and bars of soul, and it becomes free." (Complete Works of Swami Vivekanandā, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, sixth edition, 1957, Vol. III pp. 72-73).

6 What is still more important is that the Bhāgavata Dharma does not need any teacher whatsoever. Everybody can get the favour of God if he tries. Self-effort is needed, and not the intermediation of any person or preceptor. One must exercise one's free choice. The Bhagavadgītā states :

"One should lift oneself up by one's own efforts and should not degrade oneself ; for one's own self is one's friend, and one's own self is one's enemy." (VI-5) One may offer anything to God. Let it be a leaf, or flower, a fruit or even mere water. (IX-26) God shall accept it. But it must be offered by a person spontaneously and without anybody's guidance. Religion gathers much dirt around it only because some sects make it compulsory that help or guidance of a priest or middleman is essential. The priest or a middleman gets undue importance and he starts exploiting people. It is illogical to think that, God has appointed His agents on the earth and they alone can show the path of God-realization. God is not like any mortal being who needs agents to keep contacts with his persons because his power and presence are limited. God is omniscient, omnipresent omnipotent. In fact, God's gates

are open for all and everybody can seek Him in his own way. Any religion that holds that God can be approached only through agents is irreligion, for it tries to limit God's power and opens the way for corruption in the name of religion.

The Bhāgavata Dharma therefore insists on the freedom of person to exercise his choice and seek God through his own efforts and affection. Lord Śrīkrṣṇa tells Arjuna at the close of His teaching.

“Thus has knowledge, more secret than secrecy itself, been imparted to you by me. Thoroughly reflect upon it. But do as you like—*yathēcchesi tathā-kura*—XVIII-63.

Thus we find that the Bhāgavata Dharma is the real religion. It possesses all the characteristic features of an authentic religion. Any religion can be religion in an authentic sense of the term only by rising to height of the Bhāgavata Dharma which has been rightly called the Divine Religion. Otherwise that religion will be only a sect that needs further evolution to attain its real form and content.

The Bhāgavata Dharma has a rare feature which is not found in any other religion. It contains the assurance of the Lord that whenever there shall be predominance of the evil, He shall take birth to reestablish the real religion and eradicate the evil. The Gita states it very clearly.

“Whenever there is decline of righteousness, and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, I create Myself in the form of a being and set things right. For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doers, and for establishing Dharma on a firm footing, I am born from age to age.” (IV-7, 8)

This makes his point very clear that according to the Bhāgavata Dharma the universe has reality and right type of conduct a desirable quality. The Lord is not only pervading

the universe and even transcending it, He keeps a close watch on the development of the world.

What is significant is that the Lord saves the world from going into the hands of evil not through any miracle but through a human being manifesting divine strength of defeating the forces of the evil.

The Bhāgavata Dharma, it should be noted, does not believe in the rejection of any sect. It only enjoins upon the followers of a sect to develop their attitude to the level of Bhāgavata Dharma without changing the nomenclature of that sect. It only persuades every follower of any religion (sect) to rise to the level where he will realise that the Supreme Truth "though indivisible (like ether), It stands as if divided among being. That knowable substance is the sustainer of beings, destroyer of the beings as well as creator of the beings." (XIII-16) The declaration of the Lord is very important for all the sects flourishing in the names of religion, if they intend to evolve in the right direction. Let a Jñāni not unsettle the minds of the ignorant—*na buddhibhedam janayet.*" (III-26)

This breadth of vision is very desirable in the modern period. People generally lack the spirit of tolerance and are prepared to wage wars even in the names of their religions.

The Bhāgavata Dharma can be called the Eternal Religion, because it contains all those elements which as per our logical consideration shall never grow old and shall be needed in every age, every climate, every culture, every nation. Our other religious sects are generally closely connected with the historical and geographical conditions which produced them. For example, Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the West and Jainism and Buddhism in India were the product of their social conditions.

Schopenhauer was right when he thought that the Hindus were deeper than the thinkers of Europe, because their inter-

pretation of the world was internal and intuitive, not external and intellectual ; the intellect divides everything, but intuition unites everything. When he was talking about Hindu religion, he must be talking about the Bhāgavata Dharma alone. We may summarize our discussion of the Bhāgavata Dharma by saying that it accepts the principle of gradual process of spiritual goal, allows a fine synthesis between knowledge and devotion, prescribes the nonabandonment of action, and lift human activity to the highest level of universal good.

How can such a religion become old ? How can such a religion be reduced to the level of a sect ? How can the world do without such a religion ? How can such a religion be in conflict with real religion ? If any sectarian thinker condemns such a religion he betrays his own unripe understanding about the nature of authentic religion.

13

**Nature of Culture as per the
Bhāgavata Dharma**

Every religion being a way of life influences and colours the nature of culture. Culture is the path of raising the pyramid of our being as high as possible. Culture is the name of perfection of personality so far as the individual is concerned and harmonious state of society. According to Mathew Arnold, "Culture is the passion for sweetness and light, and (what is more) the passion for making them prevail." (Literature and Dogmas, Preface) Lord Tennyson's words may be used to present the real character of culture. We may state in his words that culture is the state where

"That mind and soul according well
May make one music as before
But vaster."

In Sanskrit 'saṃskṛti' is the word used for culture. This word clearly indicates that culture is the state of noble thoughts and actions. Saṃskṛti is not that which is already present, but that which should be present. Thus saṃskṛti is an ideal to be achieved and not same thing which is already existent in life.

What shall be the nature of culture deriving inspiration from the Bhāgavata Dharma?

In the following pages the nature of that culture is unravelled through an imaginary interview with Veda Vyāsa the celebrated propounder and supporter of the Bhāgavata Dharma. His ideas have been put in the language intelligible to the modern world so that the required inspiration may be drawn.

Now let us proceed to understand the nature of culture as per Veda Vyāsa.

I do not know how on that occasion when I had finished my routine study, I suddenly went to sleep. It was an odd hour for sleep, because I daily wake up at 4 A.M. and finish my morning bathing etc. by 4-30 and then read some spiritual book for about half an hour. As usual, I had taken my bath at the usual time and had studied some stanzas of the Bhagavadgita. But by 5 A.M. I had finished that reading, and instead of going for a walk I just stretched my limbs on the bed. Suddenly, sleep overpowered me. And lo, I saw a dream. Why we see dreams is a knotty question. Freud, Adler and Jung have tried to throw some light on the phenomenon of dream. Indians have believed from time immemorial that morning dreams are true. I do not know how far all these statements are true. But I deem it a duty to narrate my dream to the readers, because it was as enlightening as mysterious, and whatever I saw and experienced may be found profitable by many readers.

I dreamt that I was at the gate of Veda Vyāsa's āśrama. Veda Vyāsa was that great thinker-author who classified and arranged the Vedic literature and wrote the great Mahābhārata containing about 90,000 verses and bearing the character of an encyclopaedia of life and knowledge.

Whatever has been stated about Dharma, Kāma, Artha and Mokṣa in this great work has been repeated by others in their later works. And whatever is not found in this great

work is found nowhere else. The Indian intelligence has stated

“Obeissance unto that divine Vyāsa of immense splendour by whose grace I shall relate this story of Nārāyaṇa”

(namo bhagavate tasmai vyāsāyāmitatejase
yasya praśādād vakśyāmi nārāyaṇakathāṁmimāṁ)

The Āśrama was natural beauty incarnate. Many trees of the mangoes and Kadamba gave luscious grandeur to it; the ponds filled with lotus flowers, creepers laden with flowers of many colours, trees bearing sweet fruits, and the wild animals like lions and leopards playing with deers and hares created an environment full of universal harmony and love.

I had never seen such an enchanting place in my life. Hence, I slowly wandered in the Āśrama admiring everything that I saw, in my mind. To me the place appeared to be heaven. When I saw the sage Vyāsa sitting on the skin of the lion, I was immediately attracted towards him. His appearance was majestic and yet so lovable. He wore big hair, had a prominent nose, and well-featured body. He was white complexioned and tall. His eyes were full of divine light. His face bore an enchanting smile. His personality had magnetic influence on my mind, and as soon as I reached him, I fell at his feet with a spirit of happiness and awe.

“Blessings to you my son”, uttered the sage.

“Master, how happy I am to meet you. It appears that my merits of innumerable lives have given me this unique opportunity. I used to think that you are the creation of some fiction. But now I realize my folly,” I spoke to the sage.

“I admire every efforts in the direction of knowledge. Have you not read in the Mahābhārata “Knowledge is the support of beings; knowledge is considered the greatest ac-

quisition; knowledge is the greatest happiness in the world; knowledge is considered by the good as heaven.'

(prajñā pratīṣṭhā bhūtānām prajñā lābhaḥ paro mataḥ,
prajñā niḥśreyasī loke prajñā svargo matassatām)

"I like your love for knowledge. Your knowledge, moreover, is meant for the welfare of mankind. I shall like to enlighten you about everything that you consider to be important. I know that through you that knowledge shall reach the four corners of the world. Much time has elapsed since the Mahabharata was composed. Much water has flowed in the Ganges since then. That knowledge is eternal, but it has to be expressed through different mouths at different times to make it relevant to the particular time. From one standpoint time is still. It cannot begin, nor can it die. But looked from another angle, time is changeable. For the human world, time seems to be changeable. Nothing seems to be stable in the world. Hence, the lessons learnt one thousand years back are totally forgotten. Man is an animal who can learn. But his learning is always marked by some occasional progress and then occasional forgetting. Hence he has to be taught again and again, so that at least the basic things are not forgotten by him. If he forgets the basic things he forgoes his humanity, his progressive nature. Will you like to be a vehicle of that basic knowledge? I feel that man is running fast in the direction of annihilation. He must be reminded about those things which are needed for his survival. Though universe is too big, God loves man more than any other being. Hence, God likes that man does not commit any suicide. But at the same time divine law should not be broken. If man commits any blunder, he shall have to perish. Son, I want that man should be reminded about the right attitudes about philosophy, religion, society, state, family, freedom etc.," the sage told me in his sweet voice.

"I am very fortunate that you have thought of enlightening me about all the important matters. May I, Master, put my questions, then?" was my question.

His answer was "Yes, by all means, my son"

"This is the age of science. What is the nature of science?"

"This is a very timely question. Modern man has forgotten the nature of science. Real science is the right knowledge of supreme Truth. Generally people take partial knowledge of one aspect of truth as science. Thus you define physics as the science of matter and biology as the science of living things. It is forgotten that unless you know the truth as a whole, you are likely to misunderstand the very nature of truth. If you mistake a part of truth as the sole truth, you commit a grave mistake. That is why the modern scientists are inventing nuclear weapons to destroy their world. A real science is the study of the whole truth in a synthetic manner. If you study merely an arm of an individual, how can you know the person as he is, because part cannot reveal the whole. Hence, one must begin from a study of the whole. Only then part can also be known in the right manner.

Therefore, there is only one science, and that science is the science of whole truth. I call it 'adhyātma vidyā' i.e. the science concerning the Ātman, which is the sole truth.

Is it not funny that your scientists claim that they have seen the things rightly when they have been seen through their scientific instruments like telescope or microscope? Should they not first try to know whether the knowledge given to them through their eyes is correct and how do these eyes give this knowledge? From where these eyes derive power to see the things correctly? Then how to distinguish correct knowledge from the incorrect one? Unless you know the Ātman, this secret cannot be known, and knowledge derived in the absence of this Atmanic knowledge is likely to be misleading.

Not only does the modern man misunderstand science, he misunderstands even philosophy. Philosophy has been under-

stood as solely concerned with the understanding of words and their meaning. This is absurd. One has to understand not the words and language, but the meaning conveyed by them. Moreover, these words can reveal the nature of truth only when they try to understand it. If words are not used for conveying the truth, they are unable to rise to the height. It is true that no statement is absolutely false. Every statement reveals truth to some extent. But the question is to what extent truth is revealed. Our ordinary life has its utility, because we have to lead it till we are able to transcend it and enter the higher secrets of life. For example, a child plays with his toys; and is absolutely attached to them. These toys may have been given to a child to understand the things he is not able to understand at that time. Thus there is a king, a thief, a soldier etc. present in the form of toys. Later on with the rise of his knowledge, the child, when he grows up in the form of an adult, understands all this. The toys were true when a person is a child. But they lose their significance, when the former attains adulthood. When a child says pointing to his toy 'This is a king' he is right. But to what extent he is right, can be clear later on. Life means ascending the steps of knowledge gradually. But this gradual ascending of steps must lead us to the final truth, because it is this final truth that gives colour and contour to everything. If we stop half way, the truth is lost. The bulk of people stop in between. They fail to reach the final truth. That is why they make mistakes. The worst part of this affair is that these mistaken men dissuade others from rising higher and make their brethren and the world rather unhappy, restless, full of conflict, miserable etc.

That is science which liberates you from your agonies. But at present sciences divide people, make people fight, and bring a heap of agonies, destruction, unhappiness to the world.

Let, therefore philosophy rule the sciences. That is, let first of all the nature of the supreme truth be known, and in

the light of it, let the sciences work. Then sciences will become constructive. They shall serve mankind.

The world is like a tree the roots of which lie in the heavens. But people consider the world as a tree the roots of which are found in the material universe. Here they make a mistake. Once you consider the world as rooted in the materiality, you cannot avoid conflict, struggle, pangs, unhappiness etc. which make life miserable and intolerable. In fact the modern sciences are the part of a-parā vidyā i.e. the inferior knowledge which cannot liberate a person from agonies which are associated with the material life. Real science is Parā Vidyā i.e. the science of real being which gives us an insight into the nature of Reality.

There can be yet another classification of sciences. There are those sciences which give us pleasure; and there are other sciences which offer us happiness. The former sciences give us pleasure which lasts for a while and then plunge us into agony. Human life is a long story of sufferings interspersed with momentary flashes of pleasure. This is a life of Preyas or pleasures, which constantly make life miserable. But there is another type of life, which is a life of Śreyas or permanent good. This type of life liberates man from all miseries and agonies of life and gives him permanent bliss. Parā Vidyā gives us life of Śreyas, Aparā Vidyā gives us life of Preyas or temporary pleasures. That is why Aparā Vidyā misleads us, and Parā Vidyā leads us correctly to happiness.

I must tell you that your modern sciences are only Aparā Vidyās; but Adhyātma Vidyā is the Parā Vidyā. If Aparā Vidyās work under the Parā Vidyā, then they cannot mislead persons. Let us aim at the obtaining of the Śreyas or real well-being, and not Preyas or disturbing pleasures.

Let your physics, chemistry, biology, zoology or any other science work under the science of spirit of Adhyātma Vidyā.

Then these sciences shall become creative. They shall serve mankind and will not murder man.

Is the matter clear to you, my son?"

I—Yes, Master, I have understood the point. But what is the real nature of Adhyātma Vidyā? I shall like to understand this point somewhat more clearly.

Veda Vyāsa—I have already stated that Adhyātma Vidyā is the science of Supreme Reality. It is that science which tries to understand Reality in a synthetic manner in its entirety. In fact Supreme Reality has to be understood only in a synthetic manner. If we analyse Reality, we miss it. If one tries to analyse a human being, one cannot get the man. To get the man, one must study him in a thoroughly synthetic manner.

This synthetic method implies that if we intend to study a person we must study body as well as the spirit residing therein. Still further, we shall have to understand that body derives its strength and being from the spirit. Hence, the spirit is the basic thing. Then the spirit of men shall have to be studied synthetically. Spirit is essentially one, because if there are many spirits there shall be conflict between them. Moreover, what is the nature of spirit? It is consciousness, bliss and existence in nature. If all spirits are like that, how can we distinguish between them? There is in fact only one Spirit, which appears many because of our ignorance. Just as the sky reflected in different pictures appears different, in the same way, the consciousness appearing in different bodies appears different. This distinction between one body and the other is not absolutely wrong, because we feel it so long as we do not reach the portals of Truth. As I have stated earlier, no statement is absolutely false, because the absolute Truth is reflected to some extent in every statement. The question is how far truth is present in that statement. Here, our answers are bound to be different because our answers

shall emanate from the positions which we are occupying at a particular moment. There shall be unanimity only when we realize the Supreme Truth as compared with partial Truth.

Some people dispute the existence of spirit itself. The reason lies in the fact that the position they occupy does not allow them to see it. If we try to teach a four-year-old child that God does exist, he shall not understand God, and may think that God must be something like his father or brother. In the same way, a person standing on a lower level is likely to think that spirit or Ātman does not exist, because he cannot see it. Later on when his mind rises higher, he realises that the Ātman cannot be seen, because it is the Ātman which uses the different organs like the eyes, nose or ears etc. to know everything. He cannot be seen like an outside object because the knower cannot be known like this. How the instruments like the eye and the ear used by the Ātman can be used to know the Ātman Itself? The eye cannot see itself. If we intend to know the Ātman we shall have to realise it in a different manner through inner experience or discretion. It is absurd to say for a son to say "My mother is barren"; in the same way it is absurd to say "I do not exist" because it is contradicting a fact in a very flat way.

And what is this 'I'? This 'I' cannot be the body, because even when the body is present the 'I' may become absent just as happens when a person is asleep or is under the influence of swoon or is dead. Hence 'I' is definitely not body. This 'I' cannot be senses, because the latter are associated with the body alone. Even a blind man says 'I exist'. In fact this 'I' uses the different sense organs as instruments and drives them for a particular purpose just as a charioteer drives a chariot. What is this 'I' then? It is simply consciousness, because consciousness alone is the only fact that can give us the experience of 'I'. This consciousness is non-material in nature. Those people who think that consciousness can come out of material atoms are wrong because despite a notable progress

by science, it has not been able to produce a single instance where an ant has been produced out of a combination of material in a laboratory. If some people argue that just as a combination of betel leaf, lime and nut produces red colour though it is not present in them originally, or molasses, originally non-intoxicant, become intoxicant when allowed to ferment, in the same way consciousness is produced by the combination of material elements, they are wrong, because these instances are unlike the very nature of spirit. Moreover, if it is claimed that very specific type of material elements can produce consciousness, the question emerges that who is going to determine the specific types of material substances ? Moreover no instances have been provided. If one tries to argue on imaginary grounds, who can know the nature of Reality ?

If it is stated that 'I' is thoroughly material in nature, how are we going to explain the fact that some people try to go away from this material life like the Buddha or Jesus ? Why most of the people feel tensions and try to seek solace in the lap of religion ? How is that a person is prepared to make supreme sacrifice as Bhagat Singh did, or Gandhi did ? If man is out and out a product of matter, he must not rise above the material life. Material world is an object of enjoyment for a soul in the beginning. But as it rises higher and gets a vision of its real nature, it becomes gradually non-attached to the material life. The fact is that the spirit creates the matter as the body creates nails and hair devoid of consciousness. Hence, life is spirit and not a product of material substances.

Another point to be remembered is that the 'I' is the centre of worldly connections. The 'I' considers itself to be the father or the mother or the brother or sister of somebody, it considers itself to be the member of a certain community, it considers itself to be the citizen of a nation. The entire gamut of emotional and sentimental relationship springs from the 'I'. If there is no 'I', there is no world. The wife is dear because of this 'I' ; the husband is dear because of this 'I' ; the son is

dear because of this 'I' and the daughter is dear because of this 'I'. Were this 'I' material, there shall be no experience of the world. The world does not exist, at least to the extent to which it should exist, for a table or a chair. The theory of real causation tells us that there is an eternal and unalterable relation between the cause and effect. We can say that the effect exists in the material cause even before it is produced. The effect does not and cannot give us something not existing in the cause. If the effect were really non-existing in the cause, then no amount of effort of the agent can bring it into existence. We cannot produce oil out of the sands ; nor can we produce sugar out of salt. The efficient cause merely helps in manifesting what is already existing in the material cause in a latent form. The potter merely helps the pot to appear ; but the pot is already present in the clay in an implicit manner.

We are already aware of the fact that a particular cause produces a particular effect. Therefore, there is mutuality existing between cause and effect. From a cause, we can proceed to a particular effect, and from an effect we can proceed to a particular cause. The whole edifice of science is based on this principle. That is why certain effects can be produced from certain causes alone, and certain causes yield certain effects alone. Curd can be got out of milk alone, and cloth can be got out of threads alone. We can state this fact in other words by saying that only a potent cause can produce a desired effect and the effect exists in the cause in an unmanifested form before its manifestation. Thus we find that the cause is the implicit condition of effect and effect is the explicit condition of cause.

If this is the case how can 'I' which is consciousness come out of any material substance, which is totally unconscious. Moreover, 'I' before its manifestation in the form of an individual ego or consciousness, must be present in a potent form. That means, that the 'I' even when it seems to die, does not

die. Only the explicit form is merged in the implicit form, just as the earthen pot when destroyed becomes clay, out of which it sprang, or the golden ring when torn becomes gold, out of which it was produced. We shall have to conclude then 'I' cannot emanate out of matter, and at the same time it is eternal.

But the question arises that if the 'I' is consciousness alone, why does it identify itself with the body and other material substances? The answer is that it is open to consciousness to identify itself with anything, because it is inherently free. We should note this point that only consciousness can be free. We cannot attribute freedom to a chair or a piece of stone, because consciousness implies freedom to think or act in the way it likes. Conscious beings therefore can behave in any way they like, but a piece of stone cannot do so. Consciousness can think in an upward manner or in a downward manner. It can identify itself with God or the Absolute; or it can identify itself with the body alone and can think like the Charvaka that body alone is the self. To expect consciousness to identify itself with the higher things alone is to deny it the freedom it has. The gardener who sows a tree and nourishes it, can also cut it down, when he decides to do so. It has therefore to be conceded that man can be a demon or a god depending upon his will.

As a matter of fact even the problem of evil is the problem of conscious beings alone. Evil implies that consciousness descends to a very low level which subjects it to various pangs and agonies. Evil is not to be avoided because of any religious fervour or blind obedience to any command, whether religious or secular; evil is to be avoided because rationally speaking it brings a lot of unhappiness to consciousness (individual being). If a person murders some rich person to steal the latter's valuables, it is wrong, though apparently it may appear to the person to be profitable as he gets some money for his use, because ultimately this attachment for money shall

bring him trouble as he may be caught by the police, or plundered by somebody, or murdered by another crooked person. Moreover, other persons may mistrust him and may not keep any relations with him. They may not attend to him when he falls ill, or they may not help him when he needs their help to some extent. There are innumerable ways in which he shall be required to suffer. The evil act therefore does not pay in the long run. A crooked person brings out an evil environment which haunts him and gives him trouble and suffering in unimaginable ways. Consciousness by nature is pure. But when it identifies itself with evil acts, it invites unhappiness which comes to the perpetrator as a result of that act inevitably. Evil is thus a short-sighted act and must not be attempted, although individual consciousness is free to perpetrate it. The intrinsic purity of consciousness produces a sense of inner diequietness too. Thus the advantages sought out of that evil act are never obtained. On the other hand, only unhappiness results. This invites our attentions to the fact that consciousness is bliss. It is full of peace and quietness. It has no unhappiness. But when it identifies itself with something not-self, it gets happiness and suffering. The term not-self implies identification with something which is not consciousness.

Individual consciousness is responsible for this act, because there is nothing which compels it go towards the lower level. One may say that tendencies compel a person to make the mistake of identifying itself with the material possessions and objectives. And how the tendencies overpower the basic nature of the self may appear to be a mystery. But this mystery is solved when we think that consciousness has the potentiality of bliss, freedom etc. This potentiality has to be brought out in a pronounced manner to overcome the lower tendencies, which are the result of the association of body with the consciousness.

Though it may sound strange, but it is a fact that consciousness creates its own body, through specific urges, aspira-

tions and desires. Individual consciousness has the capacity to do so. This universe is really speaking a creation of mind. Man has this capacity, because there is no matter out of which the world is produced. If a self entertains specific desires, urges, wishes etc. he unconsciously creates his future body through them. Body is the outward expression of the inner urges. Everybody, therefore, can create the body, if he wishes to create, if he pays heed to his inner urges. That is why Rama and Śrīkṛṣṇa were beautiful. They did not have those mean and material urges which give a body deformity. It is always possible to create future bodies. If one is deformed in the present birth, he may become handsome in the next birth, if he entertains creative urges like a desire to help others, non-thieving, non-exploitation of any person, absence of jealousy or envy etc. First of all subtle body (*linga deha*) is formed. The physical body is formed thereafter.

But to understand the nature of the self, which is bliss, freedom, eternal, devoid of inertia etc. by nature, one must try to understand the Supreme Reality.

I have already told you that the self is essentially and basically consciousness alone, and there is nothing like matter having an independent existence. When the selves are consciousness alone, how can you distinguish between one individual consciousness and the other? Therefore there is only one Supreme Consciousness, as there is only one light and every bulb of electricity expresses that light in its own way. All individual selves therefore express that Supreme Consciousness in their own way? Why does the Supreme Consciousness express itself through individual selves may appear rather strange to some persons. But it is not so. Electric current expresses itself only through electric lamps etc. Why does it not express itself without them? It is so because by nature the electric current cannot express itself without such device, though it can be felt. In the same way the Supreme Consciousness expresses Itself only through the selves. We can-

not put a question as to why it does like that, because our questions have no significance for the Supreme Consciousness. Sometimes that Supreme Consciousness expresses itself in a magnificent form like Rama and Kṛṣṇa ; sometimes in the noble forms of saints and reformers like Śaṅkara, Jesus, Mohammad, Kabir, Tulsidasa, Gandhi etc. ; but generally it expresses itself in the form of ordinary persons who fight for material possessions and consider the material affluence as their sole objective. You may call it a play of the Supreme Consciousness, though the term 'play' too cannot express the full connotation of the act. You must have seen a river, which is calm and quiet at times, but which has its ripples dancing all the time. Supreme Consciousness has the ripples of individual consciousness dancing all the while. The pangs of the individual selves are caused because the latter consider themselves alone. They cannot see that they are Supreme Consciousness alone and are free from destruction or wants. When individual selves feel a sense of dejection or helplessness, they can either recall that they are Supreme Consciousness which is bliss and happiness, or they can worship the Supreme Consciousness in the form of God. If they worship God with devotion, their inner dejection is wiped out as they establish their connection with the Supreme, a channel is created through which the sense of bliss, happiness, strength etc. comes to the individual selves. Their problems of health, money or any other kind too are solved because the Supreme Consciousness is capable of doing everything. God is omnipotent, omniscient, supreme graciousness, kindness, helpfulness, etc. Thus through devotion the problems of the mundane life can be solved. But real relief from these problems shall come when the self realises that it is Supreme Consciousness Itself.

To see the Virat Form or Universal Form of the Supreme one needs an extraordinary power of perception which comes either through perfect knowledge of Reality or through devotion to the Lord. Knowledge does not mean a theoretical

awareness of Reality. It implies an inner realisation of the Real.

Then there is the question as to how this world has been created. Some say that it is self-created, i.e. nobody has created it ; others say that it has been created by God.

The world is created by God in the sense that He willed it and it came into being. Just as the self creates his body through his inner urges, in the same way the world has been created by God through His inner will. He creates the world as He likes. The difference between the self and God is that while the self is a subject of ignorance, God is aware of His powers and will. Since God is free from the petty desires, envy, etc. found in individual selves, His powers are infinite.

The world has not been created out of nothing. It has emanated from the Divine Will. Moreover, since God's powers cannot be measured or limited, we should not think that He can create only [this world. There is no limit to divine powers. We must understand it. Various things that we find in the universe are God's creation. That is why God can give anything that a worldly man wants, if the latter prays God for it. The conflict, war, misery etc. that we find in the universe are not God created ; they have been created by men, because of their ignorance. They shall continue to be present in the universe so long as real knowledge does not dawn on the minds of selves.

If people try to think that world has been created by God and it is His responsibility to maintain it, and do not indulge in deceit, envy, unhelpfulness, exploitation, attachment to the worldly objects etc. they shall create a better environment that shall make the world happier and please God because by nature God is free from every pettiness and the whole world is an objectification of His will.

Since the world is the objectified will of God, everything that we find is essentially God in reality, because divine will cannot be thought to be different from God.

But we must not forget that although everything is God, or to use the popular saying although God is present in everything, His manifestation takes diverse forms ranging from a material atom to man. From the divine standpoint, everything is thus the same. But from the standpoint of a self we can make distinction in the worldly objects on the basis of the extent of consciousness present to them.

Thus a pebble contains the smallest amount of consciousness. That means the inert objects have little consciousness. We can say that consciousness seems to be asleep there. The finer the things, the more dense is the consciousness. In man this consciousness seems to have attained maximum consciousness to be perceived in the universe.

But there is no reason to think that man embodies the maximum extent of consciousness. There may be beings who contain a greater amount of consciousness, although we are not aware of their presence. However, it must be accepted that entire extent of consciousness is found only in God, who is in fact consciousness by nature.

The possible gradations of beings therefore can be

- 1) Beings in which consciousness is absolutely asleep as is the case with material things.
- 2) Beings with a little consciousness as is the case with the trees, flowers etc..
- (3) Beings with somewhat greater degree of consciousness as is the case with insects like ants etc.
- (4) Beings with still greater degree of consciousness as is the case with animals like dogs, deer etc.
- (5) Beings with a still greater and finer dimension of consciousness as in the case with human beings.

We can express this fact by saying that comparatively speaking consciousness seems to progress from the inanimate things to human beings.

But nothing is outside the Supreme Consciousness. Or we may say that the Supreme Consciousness seems to express itself differently at various levels.

When we talk about the Supreme Consciousness, there may be persons who may like to know as to why do we believe in the existence of the Supreme Consciousness or God.

The reason is clear. I have stated it is absurd to state "I do not exist."

Therefore the existence of 'I' is an undeniable truth.

But when we try to understand this 'I' which is consciousness by nature, just as we try to understand the light coming in our rooms through windows in the day, we come to realise that this consciousness is in fact Supreme Consciousness just as the light in our windows is in fact the sun-light.

Thus the limited consciousness that is associated with 'I' is the proof of the unlimited conscious of Supreme consciousness.

Thus the 'I' implies the Supreme Consciousness, if we logically understand it. The extension of 'I' takes place even in the life of an ordinary person. So long as a person is not married, he thinks that his 'I' is limited to himself or to his parents etc.. But after marriage and the birth of children his 'I' comprises of his wife and children too. This very 'I' when extended still further includes his nation and the world. God is merely the supreme extension of this very consciousness.

Those people who demand a proof for the existence of God seem to think that He is some outside factor. They forget

that God is simply the real nature of their own 'I', when every limitation of sex, relationship, nationality etc. is cast off.

A person who demands a proof for God is like the light in his house demanding the proof of the sun-light outside that house, forgetting that both are one.

But out of ignorance, the light limited in a house thinks itself separate from the outside light viz. the sun-light.

Thus it bifurcates the light, as limited light and bigger light.

In the same way, the self bifurcates the Consciousness as the 'I' or individual consciousness and God or the universal consciousness or Supreme Consciousness.

This duality is in fact non-existent and exists so long as the nature of Reality is not grasped.

Why does this thing happen ?

If we can understand the fickle ripples of a river, we can also understand it. If we can understand the nature of consciousness, we can understand it.

Consciousness is by nature non-static and dynamic. Dynamism can be understood only as the movement of something. Dynamism of consciousness also consists in the movement of the latter. Movement implies moving upward and downward. Consciousness therefore sometime moves downward, and the world and selves emerge ; but sometimes it moves upward and then the thoughts of the Supreme Consciousness and its existence arise. This movement is an internal nature of Reality. Just as magic exists so long as its rationale is not understood, in the same way the selves and the universe exist so long as the nature of the Supreme Consciousness is not understood.

The reality of the selves and the universe is neither denied nor accepted. Selves and the universe are real existents so long as the fundamental nature of Reality is not understood. But when once the nature of Reality is realised, the multiplicity and diversity become non-existent.

But both selves and the universe are real in the sense that they both are internally Supreme Consciousness.

Man's liberation consists in realizing this fact.

I — I have understood the point Reverend Sir.

However, I have doubt that if the universe and selves are really substantially unreal, what is the use of sciences like psychology and ethics ?

Sage—There cannot be any doubt about the utility of these sciences. Psychology is the science of the soul or self. 'Know thyself' is a sound ideal. As I have stated, one may start this understanding of the self from an analysis of the physical aspect or intellectual aspect of the self. But if one does not stop there, one shall come to the point that the self is really speaking 'Supreme Consciousness.'

Psychology should guide us how this high and basic objective has to be realised. A study of psychology shall reveal the impediments to our objective. That is why the eight-fold path of Yoga has been recommended. Yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi are the aids to our realising our ultimate objective.

If psychology is understood as a mere analysis of our physical personality, what do we gain substantially ?

It must proceed from an analysis to the removal of those impediments which do not allow us to realise our real nature. Therefore psychology helps in the betterment of human destiny. But its real utility can be achieved only when

the real nature of Reality is grasped through the Adhyātma-vidyā or philosophy.

Similarly ethics is the science of ideal conduct. What is ideal conduct except that which is in keeping with the dignity of our soul ?

Goodwill, absence of envy and anger, spirit of cooperation with all truthfulness, non-violence, non-thieving etc. are ethical virtues which do justice with the intrinsic nature of soul.

Why should one be ethical is a question which may arise in one's mind.

The answer to this question lies in the fact that the self is in reality Supreme Consciousness which is the sole Reality of the universe. The distinctions and differences between man and man, and man and animal etc. are the result of a wrong view of Reality. If one hurts any being through his act or speech, he in fact hurts himself.

Hence to be ethical is to act in a way that the intrinsic nature of our self shall not be affected adversely.

An ethical conduct moves in the right direction.

An unethical conduct turns a person in wrong direction.

One cannot understand the function of ethics without the help of the Adhyātma Vidyā.

If one imbibes the Adhyātma Vidyā, one becomes an ethical person spontaneously.

However, the ethics that is based on a limited view of the reality misguides a person. It produces a 'superman' who is worse than a ferocious lion. It produces a man who is worse than a demon.

There is no relative ethics. There is only absolute ethics. Of course, one may rise to the level of absolute ethics gradually.

If one admits a variety of ethics, one denies ethics itself. One is no doubt Supreme Consciousness in one's potential form.

Real psychology and ethics help a person in giving concrete shape to that potentiality.

Ethics in reality teaches a person to become a universal being. A person who is really ethical in nature becomes a Universal Being. He hates nobody, he kills nobody, he insults nobody, because his pettiness of mind is dissolved completely.

The eightfold path of Yoga helps a person in becoming ethical by nature and conduct.

If the soul is not transformed into Supreme Consciousness where there are no petty distinctions and where harmony and unity prevail, the purpose of ethics is completely defeated.

The purpose of philosophy is to make a human being a Divine Man. Ethical conduct is the mark of a Divine Man.

Ethical conduct implies that a person has regained his universal nature, which he had lost under the downward current of the consciousness. It implies that once again he has become his usual being. Morality should not mean that a person with great effort has been able to cast off his inferior nature or tendencies. It means that he has rectified his mistake. Just as health implies being the usual self, moral conduct should mean acting according to one's intrinsic nature which is shorn of every pettiness.

In one word, morality implies acting with the spirit that one is mankind and not just a petty self.

Genuine morality consists in acting spontaneously in this noble way. Initial efforts imply that a person's personality has shrunk. This shrinking is over-powered with the help of a real insight into the nature of Reality.

There are persons who talk about transvaluation of ethics. But it is absurd. That is no value which is changed. Value, to be real value, must be something which is important and significant in all times and at every place.

Ethical values are permanent values. How can they be changed ? Ethical values are not like food habits that can be changed. Moreover, how shall we replace the values like non-violence, cooperation, truthfulness etc. ?

If we replace non-violence by violence, mutual aid by mutual conflict, where is replacement? Are we not in the habit of anger, conflict etc. in our ordinary life ?

Money, bread etc. are considered extrinsic values sometimes as distinct from intrinsic values like truth and beauty. But this kind of distinction is not proper. There are only values like truthfulness, spirit of cooperation, sacrifice etc. Other things are just useful.

Values are basically related to preservation of the intrinsic nature of the self. Logically speaking, therefore, there is only one value viz. maintenance of the real nature of the self and never forgetting it.

Those who talk about the transvaluation of ethics imply that the self is material and petty in nature. For them the only value is to maintain the majesty of their physical self.

But this view is wrong, because the self is not physical but spiritual in nature. It is the sole Reality of the world. The whole universe is a partial expression of this Reality.

Hence to know the essential feature of ethics is very easy. Whatever does justice with the sublime character of the self is good, and whatever is against this is bad.

No ethical work which has failed to recognize the real character of the self can offer any insight into the real nature of ethics. In fact, in the name of ethics, it may preach something which is entirely unethical in tone. Some persons have eulogized such a non-ethical entity giving it the name of Superman who is supposed to be quite contrary to the nature of the real self and who symbolizes un-spiritual tendencies in their extreme form.

The key to understanding the real nature of ethics lies only in grasping the real nature of the Self. Who fails to do so, fails to grasp the nature of moral philosophy too.

Thus, far from being irrelevant, psychology and ethics are very relevant to the study of the nature of the Self. In fact they help us in that direction.

I—Now Reverend Sir, I shall like to know how far this ethics is applicable to our life. For example, in the domain of politics we hear that ethical consideration has no room in politics. In the same way, we find that business men declare that business has nothing to do with ethics. In the same way practically every field of life has no place for ethics. What is the use of ethics, then ?

Sage—You have put a very important question, my son.

Many people do think that ethics is useless in the sense that if it is followed in actual life, one cannot be successful. A person accepting bribery may be unethical in conduct, but he is praised by his friends and relatives because of his wealth. In the same way, a businessman or a politician etc. praised because of the successes he gets.

But this is a very short-sighted view of life. Ethics is based on this principle that as you will sow, so shall you reap. It

has to be accepted that no organization is possible without some ethical conduct of its members. Even thieves have some code of conduct. The universe itself shows some system as is evident from the cycles of seasons. Winter, summer, rains all have their periodic turns. Not only this, even the smallest of plants contains some nucleus of system.

If this system is accepted, as it should be accepted, we shall have to concede the presence of some moral order in the universe. The Rgveda is therefore right in asserting that the Rta or the principle of moral order rules the world. Hence, this moral order is present everywhere. Our political life or business life cannot be an exception to it.

Some persons plead that politics is the last resort of a scoundrel. Treachery, oppression, conflict everything is justified in that field. But this is wrong; politics of treachery recoils upon the person who practices. It is true, many wrongful acts are committed in the domain of political activities and they seem to give some advantage of position or monetary profit to the persons concerned. But in the long run these acts do bring punishments on their perpetrators. Every act produces some power; good act produces good and beneficial power, and bad act produces bad and harmful power. But just as a seed takes time to grow into a tree, a power generated through an act takes time to be able to assert itself. How much time an act shall take to generate an effective power is a mystery of nature. Sometimes it happens that a bad act is also associated with some good acts; the result is that the bad effect becomes rather diluted. But it is not destroyed. Only it takes more time to become strong enough to be felt by a person. Nature has enough instances to prove the veracity of this statement. We find that good seeds of flowers and bad seeds of acacia both grow. Acacia cannot be turned into a flower tree; nor a flower can become a thorn. Whatever is cast in the field, if it has a capacity to grow, it does grow. In the same way, the seeds of acts do

grow in the field of life. History affords examples which prove this thesis. Alexander's life was cut short; Napoleon got defeated; Nadirshahs and Taimurlangs had their disappointments. This is nature's law. Just as the law of gravitation was alive even before it was discovered by Newton, the natural law of Karma is active in the universe, whether we recognize it or not. The ultimate effect of this law is that a person doing good acts gets realization of his intrinsic spiritual nature, while a person doing a bad act shall be going farther and farther from his real nature and shall have to undergo resultant sufferings. It is foolish to think that the law of karma shall become ineffective in the domain of politics or business. If the fire burns, anything whether it is a mansion or a cottage, in the same way the law of Karma does not know any exception.

A good act is that which reflects the spiritual nature of the self and is devoid of selfishness and pettiness.

And conversely, a bad act is that which is rooted in the restricted self, and reflects petty-mindedness. Thus to distinguish good from the evil is not difficult. Everything that falls short of the greatness of our intrinsic Self is bad. Of course, there shall be degrees of badness. The most restricted is the worst. A person who tries to think that he is limited to his body alone, his bodily self alone is real and whatever is in the interests of this bodily self should be done; even the interests of wife, or children or other near and dear persons have no significance—his action is worst. A person who is prepared to sacrifice his bodily interests for the sake of family is better; a person who cares for the interests of his community or nation is still better; a person who cares for the world is much better and a person who cares for the interests of the whole universe is the best.

In the same way, there are degrees in goodness. The best is that which reflects the sense of security and maintenance of the entire universe, and gradually descending levels leading

to the interests of the bodily self of a person are regressively lesser and lesser goods. A person is free to choose the type of act he performs. He has to make a choice. Even if he wants, he cannot avoid making a choice. That is why every act is his act; that is why he is responsible for every act, barring, of course, reflex and instinctive acts, which are planted in him by the nature.

Every act performed produces a tendency. These tendencies determine a person's personality, the psychological self. These tendencies, when become deep rooted, become 'vāsanā' and find a place in the subtle body that transmigrates after the physical death of body. These vasanas give a particular contour and colour to the personality of a child. Just as a pot of oil retains the scent of oil even when the latter is poured out, in the same way the tendencies leave a trace that can be called a vasana. Tendencies produce vasanas, and vasanas produce tendencies. Vasanas are the roots, tendencies are the branches and fruits. This chain of tendencies and vasanas, however, can be broken by understanding the true nature of the self and by doing only those acts which are in keeping with the essence of that nature with the help of a strong will.

But one thing is certain. Nobody can avoid the fruits of his acts. These fruits are subtle and cannot be observed through naked eyes by a person. They can be seen only through the eyes of insight and knowledge.

Therefore, there can be no scope for any bad act even in the domains of politics or business. Human life is one, unbroken whole. It cannot be divided into unconnected departments of political life or business life. Those who think like this are living in fool's paradise. Only there is victory and happiness, where righteousness exists. It is clear that short-sighted politicians can neither serve their real interests nor can they serve the interests of the society. If the society tolerates them, it does so out of ignorance and lack of knowledge

Unwise acts of such politicians and businessmen delay the progress of a nation and a community. A community of enlightened souls shall never tolerate such persons. But such unenlightened politicians and businessmen cannot block the way of progress of all. There are bound to be some persons of clear vision, who shall not be misguided by such persons and shall continue to make effort for clean politics and clean business conduct. Such persons make the progress of the community possible. Let us increase the number of such persons in the enlightened interests of community and the persons.

We can put this matter in other terms. There is always a conflict between the demoniac spirit and the godly one. Slowly but steadily the latter must win. This conflict is not useless. It gives meaning to the world.

The Supreme Spirit manifests three different types of energy-currents in itself. They can be called godly, human, and demoniac respectively. The godly energy produces good and desirable tendencies like truthfulness, sincerity, integrity, courageousness etc; the human energy produces worldly tendencies like desires of sex, prosperity, conflict, authority etc.; and the demoniac energy develops tendencies like laziness, sloth, inertness etc. It is the beauty of human energy that it can turn either in the direction of godly tendencies or in the direction of demoniac ones at its sweet will. But just as water has a tendency of moving towards a low level, similarly human energy usually runs towards the demoniac tendencies, giving latter some lovable name like luxury, stability etc. Once the human energy turns towards the downward levels, it becomes more and more distant from the godly energy. The result is that tensions, conflicts etc. are generated and a person is lost in that turmoil. Politics and business are fields where such things often take place. It is a psychological habit of man to rationalize the position in which he finds himself. He calls it political authority, financial power, economic strength etc.

Such words please his heart and give him some psychological relief by producing a sense of attainment.

Let me warn you, Son, that this will continue to happen till some persons filled with godly energy come forward and attract human energy towards it. Only a very rational man can do so. Circumstances shall force man to be more rational than what he is, and then politics will not be resort of the scoundrels but the hermitages of godly persons who shall use their power and resources for the benefit of the entire humanity. That will mark the real progress of human society.

I—I am grateful to you Sir, for this enlightening view. But I shall like to know your concept of progress.

Veda Vyasa—People have a very wrong notion about progress at present. For them progress means increase of material possessions and facilities. Your Herbert Spencers, Lamarcks, Darwins, Alexanders etc. fail to give real meaning of progress. Progress implies moving forward or attaining new heights. While material advancement has its significance, it should not be confused with progress. For a rational being like man progress ought to mean attaining new heights of rationality; it should mean leaving behind the degrading elements of life. Man has been defined as a rational animal or rather an animal having potentiality of rationality. Should it not mean then that this potentiality for rationality needs progressive or gradual advancement? If a person can invent an aeroplane that can move faster than sound, or can talk with a person seated at great spatial distance through telephone, or can destroy distant cities through missiles, that does not bring so much glory to mankind as a capacity of thinking in terms of entire humanity or doing something free from traditional selfishness. How can it be glorious for a person to be able to strike at a city from a distance in place of destroying persons in a face to face fight? Does it not mean that man has become more destructive than a ferocious animal who can

destroy only a couple of animals at a time ? It only means that man has become a bigger animal than what he was in the past. And this implies that rather than moving forward, he has taken a backward step. Real progress implies a state of mind which shall adopt straight forwardness in all actions (*ārjavam sarvakāryeshu*) and entertain this faith that death through Dharma is better than victory through a sinful act. (*dharmena nidharam shreyo, najayah pāpakarmaṇā*) Passion, hate, delusion, exhilaration, dejection, conceit, anger, pride, laziness, being pained at other's prosperity and such other things have become prominent features of modern man. The result is that he has spoiled his environment. He cannot get peace. He has to rise to a position where forbearance, fortitude, non-injury, equanimity, truthfulness, straightforwardness, conquest of the senses, adeptness in the discharge of one's duties, softness, a sense of shame at doing what ought not to be done, absence of fickleness, non-wretchedness, absence of flurrying contentment, sweet speech, non-hurting and freedom from envy become natural habits. He then becomes a man of wisdom and does not try to harm any person through act, mind or speech.

Man can attain this state of real progress, because a man has the capacities of a god as well as a beast. Man's progress lies in becoming a god, a being who has realized his intrinsic nature, and not in becoming a more ferocious beast or remaining at the level of animal. Rationality must flower in the form of higher knowledge (*Prajna*). Merely living at the level of pleasures of sex and eating is not real progress, whatever amount of material inventions may be there. Man suffers not because of absence of material comforts, but because of lack of higher knowledge. No amount of talks of socialism and communism can save mankind till man rises to the point of higher wisdom.

The world shall have to reach the frontiers of this higher wisdom sooner or later. However, it is in the hands of men

to expedite this attainment of higher wisdom. There should be an effort in this direction, as there is an effort in the direction of scientific attainment.

. Modern man generally thinks that man's power is limited to the extent his physical body can allow him to exert. But this is a very restricted view of man. Man has infinite powers. It has been informed to the world in the Bhagavadgita how Sanjaya, who was sitting with the King Dhritarashtra in the mansion could see the battle of the Mahabharata going on miles away. He was able to do so without the aid of any binocular or any other instrument of which a modern man can think. Modern man is likely to dismiss my statement as something imaginary. But even the experiments conducted in the Stanford Research Institute, California in the years 1973 and 1974 have proved that a man possesses Extra Sensory Perception Power. Every person can develop it, if he makes an effort in this direction. The details of these experiments were published by a periodical 'Nature' dated 18th October 1974 under the title "Information Transfer Under conditions of Sensory Shielding".

I had declared in the Mahabharata "Immortality and death—both are established in the body; death takes place out of ignorance; immortality comes as a result of truth."

(amritam chaiva mrityuscha dyayam dehe partishtitam
mrityurāpadyate mohāt. satyenādadyate 'mritam)

Man has to progress towards a state when he shall realize "There is no eye equal to learning, no penance equal to truth, no misery like passion, no happiness like sacrifice."

(nāsti vidyāsamam chakshurnāsti satyasamam tapaḥ nāsti
rāgasamam dukkham nāsti tyāgasamam sukham.)

"Higher type of knowledge is the support of being; this knowledge should be considered the greatest acquisition: this

knowledge is the greatest happiness in the world; it is as good as heaven."

(prajānā pratissthā bhūtānām lābhah paro matah prajānā niḥshreyasī loke prajānā svargo matassatām:)

Let that time come when a ruler would build up his victory by means other than war. Victory through war is the worst.

(ayuddhenaiva vijayaṁ vardhayedvasudhādhidaḥ jaghan-yamāhurvijayaṁ yuddhena cha (naradhīpa)

Real progress implies rising to this lofty stage. If human beings begin to use hydrogen bombs instead of stones and arrows in the war, it does not mean progress. If human beings merely go on increasing material luxuries, that is not real progress. For a rational being like man, real progress means attaining spiritual heights where the apparent dissimilarities of the universe disappear like the mist of the morning and underlying unity of universe is understood in unmistakable manner. Real progress means bringing about a healthy synthesis between the material and spiritual aspects of life. Wherever there is a supposed conflict between the spirit and the material prosperity, that must be wisely removed, and it has to be realised that righteousness alone can give prosperity and happiness. If the prosperity is shared by the lowliest, only then righteousness can be achieved. Real progress demands a complete change in the outlook of man. The universe has to be understood as a tree whose roots lie in the heaven, and not as a tree whose roots lie in the inert matter.

They are wrong who think that spirit is something distinct from body, or body is something opposed to spirit. Body grows out of spirit. The mistake is committed when body is remembered and its origin is forgotten. Spirit and body have to be taken as synthetically related entities, or as organic whole. The progressive person is he who goes deeper than body and sees the spirit underlying it.

Your modern man is doing this mistake of divorcing body from the spirit. The roots are not being nourished, only the outer leaves and branches are being looked after. That is why minds are becoming smaller and smaller, and conflict has become the rule.

A modern man aims at living what he calls 'high life', a life that believes in visiting high hotels, cities, and leading a fast life given to a wanton misuse of money and sex and is spent mostly in night clubs where girls and cards entertain them. They have no time to think about the ultimate aim of human life. They virtually lead a worm's life. Man should rise above the level of beastly life. Real progress of man lies in rising to a level higher than the ordinary animals. But modern man is forgetting it. Hence, this stage has to be transcended. Only then progress can be attained. In the absence of this rising above the animal level, man shall only be deluded if he thinks that he has made any progress. Illusion of progress is no progress. The marks of real progress are that man attains a balance between the mind and body, spirit and matter, and this balance is reflected in the individual conduct, family environment, social order, national set up and international demeanour. The fact is that this ideal can be achieved only through the development of really religious temperament. At present prosperity is meant for a few persons. When real progress shall be attained, prosperity shall extend to one and all. Nature produces enough for man. But inequitable distribution of money destroys the social harmony and a few people get the maximum advantage. Social and economic inequality existing on society reflects the fact that progress has not been attained by man. He has to make a much more hard and more solid attempt in this direction.

Real progress proceeds from Annamaya Kosha (materiality) to Pranamaya Kosha (life), and from Pranamaya Kosha to Manomaya Kosha (mind), and from Manomaya Kosha to

Vijnanamaya Kosha (higher consciousness), and from Vijnanamaya Kosha to Anandamaya Kosha (bliss and happiness.) Every stage which is higher does not eradicate the lower one; it only transmutes the lower into the higher, because everything contains the presence of spirit. Only the degree of that presence differs from stage to stage. Real progress does not therefore imply the repudiation or total rejection of the lower ingredients of life, it only means that the lower has to be sublimated to a higher stage so that a greater manifestation of spirit is obtained.

At present man has risen only to the extent of Manomaya Kosha. He has been able to analyse merely the psychological constituents of man's mind. Some have found sex there, some a sense of superiority or inferiority. Not only these tendencies, even instincts of death or self-annihilation have been located. This is no doubt a very clumsy and defective account of human mind. Mind also contains a lurking longing of knowing the inner immutable self. But man has generally failed to locate it. He thinks that man is ruled by instincts like combat, repulsion, acquisition, curiosity and sex etc. alone. The result is that such tendencies have been accepted as ruling principles of human mind. Hence, no effort is made to go higher than them. Thus it is proclaimed that repression of the sex, or any other tendency shall make a person abnormal.

Man has become an animal playing freely with sex and destruction. This is really speaking a depressing spectacle and betrays a pessimistic outlook of life.

Man must transcend this stage and reach the higher stage of higher consciousness. Then he shall realize that man is nobler than an animal, solely given to sex and destruction. Then his sex energy shall be transformed into something higher, and destruction shall yield place to construction. After the dawn of this higher consciousness, man shall indulge into constructive acts like sympathy for all and sharing affluence with all his human brothers.

But real progress shall be attained when man shall rise to the topmost state of happiness and bliss. Social, physical, and internal harmony that shall result from the Vijnanamaya Kosha, shall surely help man to land himself in to a region of happiness and bliss.

Man has therefore to proceed much forward. His present position should stimulate him to move forward. It is unwise to think that man has become perfect or he has nothing more to attain or achieve. Any sense of self-complacence at the present stage shall mean the end of prospects of progress.

If we think clearly, we find only two major paths before us. We have to decide to follow one, and to reject the other, because they are contradictory in nature. The names of these paths are the Way of Goodness or the Way of Pleasures. The former leads to our ultimate aim and helps in transcending our lower nature. Progress essentially implies transcending the lower and reaching higher stage. The latter course, if not abandoned, makes a man more beastly than the lowest animal, for it makes a man think that material pleasures, alone are real, the life of sex and strife alone is the ultimate aim of life.

The Way of Goodness does not mean any total rejection of the flesh. It only means that materiality has to be placed under the control of spirit which gives it a higher tone and a richer contour.

At present, most of the people think that the Way of Pleasures alone is real and has to be followed. For them the Way of Goodness is either a fiction or a method of misguiding general people with some ulterior motive of exploiting them. This is a wrong notion and is a product of immature thinking. Every progress is really speaking passing from

lower values to higher ones. It may be called a transformation of values in a creative direction. Universe is more like a thought than a machine. Machine cannot make any advance. Only thought has a potentiality and power to rise higher or go lower. If universe is inert like a machine, the entire talk about progress is futile. But, if the universe is like a thought, then the question of lower and higher values has to be accepted. Man is born with lower thought, but has a capacity of rising to the level of highest thinking. Higher thinking implies that everything cannot be given similar importance. Body is no doubt important. But it is less important than the spirit. Body is in fact a vehicle of spirit's thinking exploits. Body itself, nay, even the whole world is an embodiment of spirit's idea. And as body itself is a creation of spirit, it is not false. It is an instrument of spirit itself. An enlightened view of spirit therefore, never underestimates the significance of physical body. It however does not over-emphasize its importance. The theories of Yama, Niyama, Asanas, Pranayama etc. should be understood in this light.

I have shown in the Mahabharata in a figurative manner, that human mind is a battlefield of two principles, one good and the other bad. Betterment lies in the victory of the good over the bad. This victory however is not easy, as the bad tendencies outnumber the good ones. But if proper judgement is made, the good tendencies can get an upper hand. Real progress of man can be achieved when he over-powers the forces of darkness which bind him to the level of materiality alone and do not allow him to rise higher.

Whatever is true of human mind, is true of the human society too. Human society shall be able to make progress only when it will accept and follow higher values like truthfulness, sacrifice, cooperation, peacefulness, harmony etc.

Hence, the path of progress is vertical, not horizontal. Let this fact be realized.

I—Sir, I am really wiser because of the light you have shed on the important concept of progress. Now, Sir, I shall like to know what roles literature and art can play in this progress ?

Sage—Son, you have put a good question. Generally people have admiration for art and literature, but have no idea as to the aim of art or literature. Just as human organism is one and every part of it is important, in the same way, society is one and every part of this society is important. Literature and art have great influence over the thought of a person. Basically, there is no difference between literature and art. Literature is to an extent art, because literature by its very nature is expression of an emotion or idea in an impressive or beautiful manner. Literature and art both are the vehicles of beauty, and that is why they exercise influence over the mind of a person. They only differ in their instruments of expression. Literature expresses an emotion or sentiment or an idea through words; while art chooses instruments like stone, wood, sitar, flute, cloth or anything else. The different kinds of art are the difference of instruments of expression. These instruments are chosen by individuals in the light of their personal tastes. Some person has a capacity of playing on a violin or a flute, other has a capacity of drawing a picture on a paper or a piece of cloth or a piece of stone; some other may be adept in using suggestive words. Art merely implies a capacity to use any instrument for expressing a sentiment in an impressive manner. The language of art is powerful, because it goes straight to the heart of an individual. That art is weak which fails to move the heart. And whatever can move human heart is powerful. Its power however has to be used in a constructive manner. Every powerful weapon must be handled by a wise man alone; otherwise nothing but destruction results causing agonies to individuals and the society. But the purpose of art and literature must be properly understood. They are not merely tools of communicating ideas or sentiments in a subtle and

attractive manner. They exist for sublimating human urges and feelings. By nature a man is a slave of selfish desires. He thinks like other animals about his physical or family interests. His vision is limited, and understanding confused. Therefore he cannot, ordinarily, think about the welfare of a larger society. But art and literature help him in thinking rather broadly. That art or literature is good which extends the vision of an individual. In fact the goodness and greatness of art or literature varies with the interests of a larger or the largest human society. That art is good that subserves the interest of a society in which the artist lives. But that art is the greatest that subserves the interests of human society as a whole. The interests of the largest society can be served only when noble sentiments like self-effacement, sacrifice, fellow-feeling, cooperative spirit etc. are aroused in the minds of the readers or spectators. These sentiments are not non-existent in human mind, because if they are non-existent, they cannot be created or produced. But they lie very deep into the layers of human consciousness. Ordinary art and literature touch the surface of the conscious aspect of human mind, where pettiness of feelings and sentiments exists. It requires the impact of a great literature, to go deeper in the mind. A literature that caters to the sex or physical needs of an individual can become popular, because surface-consciousness is pleased with it. But popularity can never be a touchstone of great literature or art. Great literature has to fathom the depth of human self, and an ordinary person is reluctant to go so deep. The deeper aspects of the self do not contradict or dismiss sex or other instincts of man ; they only transform them. Nothing is fundamentally bad in man. It is the disproportion of some tendencies that debases human personality. When that depth of the self is touched, the sex loses its obscenity, courage does not become cruelty, sympathy does not degenerate into attachment for the family, mind begins to see the real Self as the Being of the universe. Literature to be great must eliminate the difference and must present the world of harmony and unity.

Does it not imply that literature and art have to be handled only by the deserving persons who have learnt the art of rising above mean but natural human tendencies ? If incompetent persons handle such great weapons like art and literature, nothing but disaster shall descend on society, because bad literature and art have great corrupting power too. As a matter of fact to corrupt a person with the help of art and literature is easier than to sublimate him with their help as like water human tendencies descend to the lower level more swiftly as compared with the water, which has to be lifted with caution and effort upwards, if we intend to raise it towards the higher level and direction. Persons of social perception must know this fact.

I had declared in the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata :

“Immortality and death—both are established in the body ; death takes place out of ignorance ; immortality comes as a result of truth.”

(amṛtaṁ caiva mṛtyusca dvayaṁ dehe pratisthītaṁ
mṛtyurāpadyate mohat satyenāpadyate'mṛtaṁ)

Bad art and literature can cause the death of society, while good art and literature can give immortality to society. Bad art is like slow poison that ultimately kills a person. Let the whole world understand this fact. Discord, disharmony, conflict, exploitation, cruelty are sure to develop in a society affected by bad art and literature.

It should be remembered that every artist is not only an exponent of personal values, he is an exponent of social values too. It is his duty to give importance to those values alone which are creative in nature. An artist even creates new values, because sometimes art and literature set new norms before society. The appeal of the art goes straight to the hearts of individuals and makes those values which an artist or a person of literature enshrines in his work acceptable to them. If these values are destructive, they play havoc with society; but if these values are creative, they give a fine shape

to society. The spiritual values are by nature creative, while the material values are by nature delimitative and therefore destructive. However, it will be wrong to think that there is any basic conflict between the spiritual and material values. Of course, material values think that they shall be eradicated by the spiritual values. But this is a very wrong conception of values. The spiritual values do not destroy the material ones, they only give new shape to the material values. Spirit cannot disregard the world, because the latter is the vehicle of the former. The spirit creates body for furthering its nobler ends : but human mind errs and blinded by animal tendencies begins to regard the spirit as the enemy of the body and accepts material progress as the sole aim of life. The result is that the balancing factor of life is rejected and a state of endless competition, dissatisfaction, mental torture, care-afflicted moments etc. come into being. Art and literature are teachers of the first order, whether they are accepted in this way or not. After all, who is a teacher ? Teacher is one who leaves an impression on the mind of a person. It is wrong to think that a teacher is always imparting good things of life. There are teachers who are bad, because they leave bad impressions on mind. For example, a person who says that stealing is a good thing or harassing people is desirable, cannot be called a good teacher. Art and literature cannot afford to be bad teachers because the harm caused by them is far more extensive and deep, than the harm caused by a person who preaches such things orally, because art and literature influence the posterity and even those who are not physically present before a teacher.

What is the secret of the power of influence contained in a piece of literature or art ? The power comes from the intensity of the feeling that an artist experiences and the way in which he communicates it so that the reader or spectator may experience that very feeling which the artist himself had experienced. If a man of literature portrays only what he has experienced, his work is bound to be so powerful that the rea-

der is bound to be influenced. After all there is an identity of experiences. Human hearts despite their differences are not so distinct as they appear to be. On the other hand they have the same type of feelings, sentiments, and sensations. That is why it is possible to evoke the same type of sentiments by the artist. But it should be remembered that low types of human urges like sex, anger, greed etc. should not be aroused by an author, because they are already found in abundant measure in an ordinary person. The problem before an average person is to go beyond them. To transcend them is necessary, because they put a limit around the growth of personality; they are fundamentally delimiting principles, and put persons on the level of other animals with certain differences. If people remain at the level of order animals, they are bound to have conflicts, tensions, restlessness etc.. Hence that literature is the real literature that arouses higher sentiments like fellow-feeling, sympathy, self-sacrifice etc.. Such literature and art can bring happiness to human society, and satisfaction to the individual beings.

Art and literature are very powerful and significant instruments of communicating the inner feelings and ideas. They move the human heart that can change the very life of a person. That is why we Indians consider them to be dedicated to the Supreme Lord. The idea is that these instruments should be used invariably for creative purposes. To exploit them for petty and mean objectives is blasphemy. The greatest literary figures are those who have used their literary talents for creative purposes and have not cared at all for material gains in terms of money, fame, power etc. Shiva has been called Nataraja, the King of Dancers. Dancing is merely symbolic of all arts and literature. Shiva is the God of creativity in this sense that He implies good of all, and not of any particular person. Shiva Himself is a recluse and needs nothing for Himself. He does not need even praise, say nothing about riches or any thing else. Only that person, therefore, can master the secrets of art and literature who is

non-attached to the world like Shiva and uses his art for the welfare of humanity. If a person with petty-minded outlook uses the instruments of art, he is bound to bring destruction to society, because larger interests of humanity shall be forgotten by him.

Indian name for art is 'kalā' which means 'beautiful'. Only that is beautiful which is in the interests of all ; that is ugly which is in the interests of one person or a few persons or a small community. Sanskrit word of literature is 'sahitya', which means that 'which is in the interests of all'. Therefore there is only one standard of judging the greatness of art or literature, and that is whether it sub-serves the interests of all, i.e. whether the artist has a liberal objective. Shallowness of heart on the part of an artist makes his creation undesirable.

'Venerable Sage' is there any way whereby the existing state of things can be improved ?

'There is certainly a way that can improve the situation. That way is education. Unfortunately people do talk about education, but they fail to understand its real import. If education is not understood in the right manner and misunderstood for something degrading, then the result will be simply disastrous.

Really speaking, that is education which purges mind from the petty feelings, ideas and sentiments like greed, cruelty, exploitation, insincerity, oppression, self-aggrandisement etc., Sā vidyā yā vimuktaye. At present nothing is being done to broaden the human mind. On the other hand, competition, rivalry and such other things are usually taught through education. A student who secures the highest marks by any means is lauded.

Tell me, do you not honour or reward a person because he leaves his colleagues behind in a race or study while you

disregard a student who sacrifices himself for the sake of his companions, or tries to be helpful to every person, will there be no increase in competition, will not persons try to be victorious at all cost under the circumstances? A student who has been brought up in an environment which gives topmost value to success in competition is bound to have a tendency of not cooperating with others in the heart of his heart and shall try to leave every other person behind whether it is a race of earning money, or race of winning authority, or a race of winning name and fame in society. He shall become hypocrite or crooked because this is the only way of winning every race. When victory is the sole aim of life, it is futile to expect people to be watchful about the means. Their motto is "End justifies the means". When there is no fear of God, when there is no question of rebirth, when there is no question of disrespect from society even after an adoption of unfair means, it is but natural that a person shall like to score a victory at all costs. He is, moreover, sure to justify his acts in an unabashed manner.

The result of such education can be nothing but unpleasant. His individual life must be physically and mentally unhealthy. Worries, obsessions, hysteria, neurasthenia, anxiety psychoneurosis, perversions etc. are likely to attack the mind of a person. His body too is bound to be affected as a result of this mental attitude, because mostly body is influenced by the mind. Alienation can lead a person to a most pitiable condition. The total result will be that even a materially prosperous person is likely to be a most sickly person.

The condition of the society cannot be better. After all individuals constitute society. If they are sickly, how can their society be healthy? The result is that their society is marked by conflict, war, corruption, social distance, oppression, exploitation etc.

If you look human history of the last three hundred years, the years which have brought some scientific, social and cultural changes in human society all over the world, you shall find that wars have grown more savage, governments have become more cruel, authorities have become more intolerant, literature has become more unimpressive, art has become more shallow. Scientists think that they are not concerned with the questions of morality. They have invented deadly Atom and Hydrogen bombs and chemical warfare. They have tried to reach the Moon, but have never thought of feeding the human beings who lead a life devoid of proper food and shelter. Whole so-called social prosperity has yielded only more sufferings and calamities to the vast bulk of people. Political ideologies have been invented, but the sole concern behind them is to get individual comfort and power. They say that the power corrupts man. I say wrong education corrupts man. Education has not brought out what is the best and the noblest in man. It has merely sharpened animal appetites of man. Man is no longer a paragon of animals. He is the dirtiest animal.

I had preached long ago, and I still hold that view, that real education should aim at the development and radiation of physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of an individual and human society. Any education which looks only to the economic prosperity of individuals grossly misses the objective. I merely laugh at those people who think that wretchedness of individual and social life is due to economic factors alone. They forget that economic inequality itself is the result of defective attitude of individuals constituting a society. Uncultured or uneducated people (I do not talk about unlettered people), try to gather all economic power in their hands with a view to enjoy the benefits of physical life and political status. These people very eloquently talk about their communistic or socialistic ideologies. And of course, there is nothing bad in their ideologies. But these ideologies remain ignored when there is a question of actual conduct. The result is that the

dictators or power-crazy persons flourish under the cloak of lofty ideologies. Man can make progress only through spiritual education. When a person realizes that he is a spirit, nay, everybody is a spirit like him, he does not try to harm any person, and sees his own emancipation in the emancipation of one and all. Unless a person realizes his intrinsic unity with one and all, he is bound to be swayed by the impulses of separateness and selfishness, which are responsible for disorder in a social setup and disquietness, of some kind in an individual mind. A person following righteousness must always stand for whatever is good for the world, renouncing what is pleasant to himself. He should be above vicious additions. He should adopt virtue and material good and shun passion and anger. That society deserves pitying where beggars and thieves flourish. Real education teaches a person that death through righteousness is better than victory through a sinful act.

Avarice, that huge repacious animal, is the basis of sin ; it is from avarice that anti-social acts emanate : unrighteousness and worst type of misery result from it. It produces fraud. A person who has realized his spiritual nature shall be free from avarice.

I want that you should clearly understand that passion, hate, delusion, dejection, conceit, anger, pride, laziness, jealousy and unrighteous action are the product of ignorance—ignorance of the basic spirituality of man.

On the other hand, a person who has realized his basic spirituality, shall have forbearance, fortitude, non-injury to others, equanimity, truthfulness, straight forwardness, conquest of the senses, adeptness in the discharge of one's duties, softness, a sense of shame at doing what ought not to be done, absence of fickleness, non-wretchedness, absence of flurry, contentment, sweet-speech, non-harming, and freedom from envy without any effort.

When one withdraws all desires into himself, as a tortoise its limbs, then the light and splendour of the soul become manifest within himself. He conquers fear, and none is afraid of him. He neither likes nor dislikes in the ordinary sense of the term. He is really wise.

I have repeatedly declared that there is no eye equal to real learning, no penance equal to truth, no misery like passion, no sacrifice like the sacrifice of animal urges, no happiness like the happiness of realization of the real self.

Real knowledge is the real support of beings. It is the greatest acquisition ; it is the most magnificent happiness.

Like the chaff among the grains and gnats among the birds are those among men, with whom righteousness is not the motive force.

An ordinary person is fond of pleasures of sex and eating. He may even steal other's possessions in the sense that he wants to get the objects of pleasure even without earning them through honest physical labour. He may be violent in tongue, because when the objects of pleasures are not obtained, one tries to be angry with those who act as obstruction. But a person, who is really educated spontaneously rises, through his efforts to a height where these things do not influence him. He goes beyond the reach of ordinary temptations. Being without sorrow due to his non-attachment to the mundane possessions, he is always happy and healthy. Never forget that conduct and not mere words are important. One obtains a long life and happiness only through good conduct.

One must bathe in the sacred waters, deep, clear and pure, of one's own mind, take a dip in the lake of firmness and at the bond of truth. Penance, knowledge, softness, truthfulness, straight forwardness, non-injury to all beings, sympathy, self-control, tranquillity—these constitute purity by bathing in waters. Purity of conduct is the great purity.

An uneducated person experiences every day thousands of occasions for sorrow, and hundreds of circumstances producing fear. An educated person, it need not be added, is never subjected to any such experiences.

Real learning is not satisfied with a knowledge of alphabets alone ; it goes further and enables a person to realize his spiritual potentialities which bring him happiness and spread the environment of harmony and cooperation all around him.

Man suffers because he has not tasted the fruit of education. He has satisfied himself by calling his knowledge of letters as his real education. But this is wrong. It is the higher type of thinking coupled with right type of conduct which must be called real education. If a person calls a paper flower as real rose flower, will that paper-flower give him the experience of a real flower ? It is gross ignorance of reality. No solid benefit can emerge out of such ignorance.

Man is under the impression that he is just like other animals with only this difference, that he can amass wealth, kill his enemies with deadly weapons, use ornamental language to hide his real intention, and cheat his fellow beings under the garb of big names like democracy, or equality, fraternity, liberty, or the expropriation of exploiters. But this is a wrong notion. Unless man transforms his destructive impulses into something constructive and noble forms, he shall remain an animal of the worst kind, because even a lion is not so destructive as a crooked man.

It is foolish to blame people for all the bad things that are being perpetrated in this world, because he has not been taught good things right from the birth. What he has been taught is merely a cult of materialism which has no place for moral candour, and which dismisses righteousness as the way prepared by bad people to hoodwink simple folk. Body has been accepted as the only truth, and spirituality has been

dismissed as a remnant of vicious and ignorant tradition. Education should be a process of an encounter with hidden and encompassing ignorance that hides the sight of truth. It must bless a person with a determination of unravelling the hidden face of reality. The entire human life is an opportunity to break through the veils of unreality. If education merely helps in caring for the body and forgetting the soul, nothing substantial can be attained. Remember it, body is not to be discarded. It is the temple of soul. But if one worships merely the walls of a temple, and forgets the deity, what enlightenment can be expected? Sanctity of the body is derived from the majestic presence of the soul. Knowledge of the self implies giving due importance to the body. But it forbids the tendency of giving over importance to the physical objects. The trouble starts only when the material things are given more importance than what they actually deserve. Education should aim at the cultural development.

Venerable Sir, what is meant by cultural development ?

Veda Vyasa: Son, you must be acquainted with the term culture. Culture stands for growth. To be more precise, it stands for inner growth. Unfortunately at present the world seems to confuse culture with the attainments of the physical nature alone. For example, now the man has aeroplanes moving faster than sound. Inventions of radio, television, and various mechanical devices have given many advantages to the mankind. Spatial distance has been destroyed, and fast inter-communication has become possible. Inventions of nuclear weapons have given such a deadly power to some nations that the whole earth can be destroyed within no time. Many drugs have been found out to cure many deadly diseases. Man has been able to reach the distant moon. In fact there are many wonderful inventions which have given mankind new power, comfort, and sense of confidence. And all this has been confused with culture.

No doubt culture does not disregard the physical attainment. But essentially it signifies an inner development, a spiritual awakening, which alone can pave the way of real progress of a man and his society. Culture is essentially stepping from darkness to light, moving from death to immortality. Culture should enable us to answer the question "Which God deserves our worship?" (*kasmai devaya havisha vidhema*) because unless we have a clear concept of the ideal which should be acceptable to us, we cannot move forward. The entire universe is filled with one single Power. That Power is not only present everywhere. It also maintains order in the universe. That power is the Absolute. Limitation leads to destruction. The Absolute alone can give us immortal joy. That Supreme is the source of all life. That Supreme alone maintains everything, and everything ultimately must be merged in that Supreme alone.

A person ought to know that everything in this world is dear only because of the self. One loves one's wife or one's son only because of the self. Therefore one must try to understand the basic nature of the self. By knowing the real nature of the self, one can know everything that deserves to be known in the world. Real success of life can be attained only through a thorough knowledge of the self. The spiritual values of life, truthfulness, integrity, enjoyment of life in a non-attached manner, fearlessness, non-violence, forgiveness, absence of malice, fortitude, tranquility of mind, kindness, come spontaneously to a person who has known the real nature of the self. He works in a very competent manner and is not carried away by the ideas of fruits of actions. Restraint of the beastly aspect of mind is easy for him. Culture has three aspects; philosophical, social, and individual. Though there are three aspects, they are really speaking inter-connected and can be termed one.

Philosophical aspect of culture is very important in the sense that it is the foundation of one's conduct and behavi-

our. If one is of the opinion that there is no spirit, and the material world with all its multiplicity alone is real, then naturally, his conduct will be based on conflict and cruel competition. He is constrained to oppose and eliminate others for the attainment of luxuries of life. Even for the satisfaction of his basic needs like food, sex etc, he shall be required to wade through the river of blood of intense and cruel competition. How can we expect him to cooperate with others? And why would he cooperate? Even if he cooperates with others, it will be out of his selfish desire to get something through this cooperation for himself alone, and then he will like to eliminate all those persons who cooperated with him one after the other so that he shall not have any danger from any side.

On the other hand, if one knows that only one Absolute exists and the spirit is eternal and ever existing force, one shall not indulge in any destructive activity or conflict.

What is the nature of ultimate Reality? The question has been answered variously. According to some it is one, non-dual in nature. Multiplicity is unreal and false. According to others, the entire universe is the result of the union of two fundamental reals viz. Prakriti and Purusa. According to still another view, we have no ground to presume that the multiplicity is false. These are the different points of view. We cannot dismiss them as substantial and without any foundation whatsoever. But at the same time, one cannot accept them in their present form; because in their present form they are contradictory in nature. In order to present a good picture of itself, philosophy must clarify the position before it tries to justify its importance and significance.

In order to understand the basic character of reality one should pay one's attention to the psychological development of an individual soul. In the beginning a child is quite unable to distinguish between his own self and the outside

world. By and by, it learns the lesson of differentiating between itself and the outside world. That means for the child the whole world is one and single entity. If we try to get a cue from this, the nature of the ultimate reality can be grasped without any trouble.

The ultimate reality is one and non-dual at the beginning. To understand the real nature of reality one does not need learning. One rather needs the insight and innocence of a new born child. That means that one has to unlearn many things that one learns in the world. A question, however, may be asked here "If the reality is one, single, and non-dual in character, why does it appear as many and diversified?"

This question is not very easy to answer. But it has to be answered. It is the basic nature of reality to become diversified (*eko'ham bahusyam*). Reality grows into multiplicity as a seed grows in the form of leaves, trunk, branches, roots and fruits. This multiplicity grows around the sense of 'I'. This sense of 'I' is the ground on which the tree of multiplicity develops and grows. An individual does have the sense of 'I'; but he mistakes it to be his petty self. From where does this sense of pettiness emerge? It emerges from one's incapacity to make an attempt to grasp the real meaning of 'I'. When an individual is able to go deepest in the depth of the sense of 'I', he realizes that this 'I' is the Absolute, the Brahman, the Limitless and boundless. The individual consciousness is merely a part of the world consciousness or supreme consciousness. Particle of water of the sea should realize that it is not a particle of the sea, it is sea itself. Multiplicity is not false. It has grown from the reality itself. But its root must be very clearly grasped. This multiplicity may grow, but with this growth should grow the consciousness that it is all rooted in 'I'. Just as body grows from the 'I', the multiplicity has grown from the 'I'.

This consciousness of the fact that everything is rooted in the 'I' is forgotten because the diversified forms of the basic

reality have a tendency to forget the truth and sink into a false sense of petty and fractional 'I'. This false sense is likely to grow where the consciousness is alive to some extent, but is not fully aroused. Where this consciousness is very much dormant, as in the vegetables mountains, rivers etc., or not sufficiently developed as in the beasts, this false sense of 'I' does not emerge. But where this consciousness is present in an adequate measure though not fully matured, the danger is that the 'false sense of 'I' can overpower an entity. This ignorance is the result of stereotyped thinking and comes from abandonment of clear thinking.

Before we proceed further let us try to recapitulate whatever we have learnt so far:

1. Reality is non-dual in character as is evident from the experience of a new-born babe.

2. This nondual Reality has a tendency to grow into a diversified form which is sometimes described as multiplicity.

3. This diversified form consists of parts where consciousness is dormant and parts where consciousness is not sufficiently developed as well as the parts where consciousness is not fully matured.

4. The false sense of 'I' characterises merely those parts where consciousness is not fully matured. Unmatured consciousness delimits our mental horizon.

What should be done to gain the lost sense of the real 'I'. One should gradually widen the sphere of one's consciousness. From the sense of the individual self, one should grow further and develop the sense of becoming one's family; from this sense of becoming one's family one should try to grow higher and become one's province; from this sense of becoming a province one should try to be the nation; and from this sense of

becoming a nation one should grow to the sense of becoming the mankind; from this sense of the mankind, one should grow to be animate being; and from this sense of animate being one should rise to the position of becoming the whole universe. The full view of reality cannot be had in one glance. One must try to go to the root gradually. Only then one can find the truth and understand the real nature of reality.

The world exists so long as our concept of petty self or selves exists. Once one is able to develop a matured insight, one is liberated from the pettiness because one realizes the truth. But this realization does not demand merely an intellectual effort. It demands endeavour of one's inner core viz. a sense of faith in the truth. Knowledge that does not develop into faith is a mechanical knowledge and is quite useless. For realization we need an unflinching insight. Generally our sense organs drive us to the outer world. Therefore an average person only sees the outside world. He is incapable of looking inside. Only a very brave soul, who wants to attain immortality, is able to control the out-seeing urge of his sense-organs and is able to realise the real nature of the self. The persons who study are better than those who do not study at all; persons who can grasp the inner meaning of books of truth are better than those who merely read books rather mechanically; but better than those who are able to grasp the inner meaning of a work are those who translate teachings of the books of truth in their actual conduct. Thus the real test of whether a person has really grasped the inner meaning of the books of truth is his conduct. Such a person is really cultured. Individually, he is free from timidity, selfishness, cruelty, avarice, ignorance, narrow-mindedness, deceit, false sense of ego, attachment to the various temptations of the world. His self is free from all the limitations.

Such a person thinks himself to be the son of the mother earth and father sky. He has no tinge of pettiness. He sees the universe as filled with the Spirit. He has no greediness

His will is pure and aims at the welfare of one and all. He does not flee away from his duties and lives his life in a magnificent manner without any sense of helplessness. His health is perfect. Every part of his body is filled with divine strength. He is a perfect father, a perfect mother, a perfect son. He is a perfect neighbour, a perfect householder, a perfect citizen, a perfect world-citizen, a perfect human being. He remains uncorrupt though being surrounded by the corrupting things and elements. He never feels diffident and works ceaselessly for the betterment of one and all. Being steadfast in his faith that he is spirit alone, no pettiness, no deformity of body or mind ever touches him.

Culture is essentially an inner growth of sublimity. A person who is cultured has no illwill for anybody. He always wishes the betterment of one and all. Not only this, he is at peace with his natural environment too. He extends his affection even to the tiniest shrub. Fortitude, forgiveness, kindness, purity of body and mind, affection for all, soft tongue, and faithfulness with friends—these qualities make a cultured person outstanding. Such a person strives for one and all.

Culture is a quality of heart and mind. It is a high ideal which has to be attained only gradually and smoothly. It is not possible to make a person cultured all of a sudden. Just as corn takes time to grow, culture needs time to flourish. Civilization is a manifestation of culture in a society. Some people confuse culture with the existing state of rituals, and practices prevalent in society. If that is culture, nobody can be found deficient in it, as through imitation even an animal learns many things. Culture is a development and flowering of spiritual values which obliterate the marks of outer distinctions found in human society. That is why culture aims at unifying mankind, and not dividing it. Through a planned educational effort in which literature, history, philosophy, religion, science—all wear a constructive form, this culture has to be developed and nourished.

One should not think that it is easy to develop this culture.

On the other hand because of the difficulties involved in the attainment of this culture, a majority of people is likely to dismiss this culture as a sweet dream of some unpractical minds. To such persons I shall like to say that man contains immense potentiality for development. Development and progress are not for defeatist mentality.

Even if for argument's sake it is accepted for a moment that mankind shall never be cultured to the extent to which we intend it to be, how can we forget that nothing but betterment to some degree shall be attained through such effort. On the other hand, our despondency shall only worsen the matter.

Mankind has invented nuclear weapons which are capable of destroying the universe within no time. If such undreamt of weapons can be invented, why the aim of real culture cannot be attained? We need only brave resolve and determination to rise to the height of culture.

Moreover your world has no alternative. If this culture is not developed in due course of time, the dooms day shall overtake mankind.

I saluted the sage and began to wonder whether the wisdom of the sage can be utilized by mankind to an ample measure. And lo, my eyes were awake, and I found myself on my bed.

I have recorded my dream for the benefit of humanity. If people think that the sage's words were wise, and his advice sound, they must try to implement his advice. If on the other hand they think that his advice was absurd and unpracticable, they may reject it. For my part, the more I ponder over the words of the sage, the more convinced I become of the soundness of his advice.

From the Bhagavadgita

Nature of God

The effulgence inherent in the sun, which illumines the entire universe, and that which exists in the moon as well as in the fire, know it to be My effulgence. And entering the earth, it is I who sustain all beings by my power; and becoming the nectarean moon, I nourish all plants.

Becoming the fire which dwells in the bodies of living beings, and uniting with the Prana and Apana breaths, I digest the four kinds of food.

And it is I who am installed in the hearts of all (as their inner witness). Memory, wisdom and the ratiocinative faculty also emanate from Me. It is I whom the four Vedas seek to know; nay, it is I who am the author of the Vedantas as well as the Knower of the Vedas (i.e. revealed works).

(XV-12 to 15)

I am the Vedic ritual, I am the sacrifice. I am the offering to the dearest. I am the herbage. I am the sacred formula I am the clarified butter. I am the sacred fire, and I am verily the act of offering oblations into the fire. I am the

sustainer and ruler of this universe, its father, mother and grandfather, the knowable, the purifier, the sacred syllable Om, and the three Vedas-Rik, Yajus and Sama. I am the supreme goal, supporter, lord, witness, abode, refuge, disinterested friend, origin and end, the resting place, the store-house (in which all beings are merged at the time of universal destruction), and the imperishable seed. I radiate heat as the sun, and hold back as well as send forth showers. I am immortality as well as death; I am being and non-being both.

(IX-16 to 19)

Neither gods nor the great sages know the secret of my birth, for I am the prime cause in all respects of gods as well as of the great seers.

He who knows Me in reality as without birth and without beginning, and as the supreme Lord of the universe, he undeluded among men, is purged of all sins.

Discrimination, true wisdom, sanity, forgiveness, truth, control over the senses and the mind, joy and sorrow, evolution and dissolution, fear and fearlessness, non-violence, equanimity, contentment, austerity, charity, fame and disrepute—these diverse feelings of creatures emanate from Me alone.

The seven great seers, the more ancient four (Sanatana etc.) and the fourteen Manus (progenitors of mankind), who are all devoted to Me, are born of My will; of them all these creatures in the world were begotten.

He who knows in reality this supreme glory and supernatural power of Mine, gets established in Me through unwavering devotion; there is no doubt about it.

I am the source of all creation; everything in the world moves because of Me; knowing thus the wise, full of devotion, worship Me.

(X-2 to 8)

There is nothing else besides Me. Like clusters of yarn-beads formed by knots on a thread, all this is threaded on Me. I am the sapidity in water and the light of the moon and the sun; I am the sacred syllable Om in all the Vedas, sound in ether, and manliness in men.

I am pure odour in the earth and pure brilliance in fire; nay, I am life in all beings and austerity in ascetics. I am the eternal seed of all beings. I am the intelligence of the intelligent; the glory of the glorious.

I am the might of the mighty, free from passion and desire; in beings I am the sexual desire not in conflict with virtue.

Whatever other entities there are, born of Satva (goodness) and those that are born of Rajas (the principle of activity), and Tamas (the principle of enertia), know them all as evolved from Me alone. In reality, however, neither I exist in them, nor they in Me.

(VII-7 to 12)

Though unborn and immortal, and also the Lord of all beings, I manifest Myself through My own Yogamaya (divine power), keeping My Prakriti under control.

Whenever there is decline of righteousness, and unrighteousness increases, then I take a birth.

I take birth from age to age for the protection of the virtuous, destruction of miscreants, and establishing the rule of righteousness on a firm footing.

My birth and activities are divine.

(IV-6 to 9)

The Supreme Deity has innumerable mouths and eyes, is decked with many divine ornaments, wields many divine weapons, puts on divine garlands and clothes, is besmeared

with divine sandal paste, is full of wonders, has faces on all sides and is infinite.

If there be the effulgence of a thousand suns bursting forth all at once in the heavens, even that would hardly approach the splendour of the mighty Lord.

The entire universe is contained only in a very small part of the Divine Person.

(XI-10 to 13)

He is the Supreme Indestructible worthy of being realized; He is the ultimate resort of the universe. He is the protector of eternal Dharma. He is the eternal imperishable Being.

He is without beginning, middle or end; possesses unlimited prowess and is endowed with numberless hands, having the sun and the moon as His eyes, blazing fire from Mouth and scorching this universe by His radiance.

Space between heaven and earth and all the quarters are filled by His presence.

The host of gods enter Him, some with palms joined out of fear chant His names and glories. Hosts of Maharshis and Siddhas say 'Let there be peace' and extol Him by means of the very best praises.

(XI-18 to 21)

He is that which is existent (sat) and that which is non-existent (asat), and also that which is beyond both. He is the prime Deity, the most ancient Person. He is the ultimate resort of the universe. He is both the knower and the knowable and the highest abode. It is He who pervades the universe, assuming endless forms.

He is the Wind-god, Yama, the lord of death, Fire-god, Moon-god Creator of beings.

He is the Father. He is the greatest teacher of the animate and inanimate creation and supremely adorable. In the three worlds there is nobody who can be equal to Him.

He is only worthy of all praise. He condons the fault of His devotee as a father condons the fault of his son, a friend condons the fault of a friend and a loving husband condons the fault of his beloved.

(XI-37 to 44)

Not knowing My unsurpassable and undecaying supreme nature, the unintelligent think Me, the supreme Spirit beyond the reach of mind and senses, the embodiment of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss, to have assumed a visible form.

Veiled by My Yogamaya, I am not manifest to all. Hence these ignorant folk do not recognize Me as the unborn and Imperishable Supreme Spirit (i.e. consider Me to be subject to birth and death).

I know all beings, past as well as present; even those that are yet to come; but none (devoid of faith and reverence) knows Me.

(VII-24 to 26)

The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, who are mounted on the automaton of this body, causing them by His illusive power to revolve (according to their actions)

(XVIII-61)

Marks of a Stable Man—a Person Authentically Religious

When one thoroughly abandons all cravings of the mind and is satisfied in the self through the joy of the self, then he becomes a man of stable mind.

A person whose mind remains unperturbed in sorrows, whose thirst for pleasures has altogether disappeared and who is free from passion, fear and anger, is called a possessor of stable mind.

He who is unattached to everything, and while experiencing good or evil, neither rejoices nor recoils has a stable mind. When like a tortoise, which draws in its limbs from all directions, a person learns to withdraw his senses from the sense-objects, his mind becomes stable.

Sense objects cease to have any attraction for him, who does not enjoy them with his senses, yet the taste for them persists. This relish too disappears when a person realizes the Supreme.

(II-55 to 60)

The undertakings of a really religious person are all free from desire and thoughts of the world. His actions are burnt up by the fire of wisdom.

A really religious person gives up attachment to actions and their fruits. He is not dependent on the world and is ever satisfied. Though he may seem to be engaged in action, he in reality does nothing.

His mind is subdued, and so is his body. He gives up all objects of enjoyment and has no craving. He performs mere bodily actions and as such does not incur any sin.

He is contented with whatever is got unsought, is free from jealousy and has transcended all pairs of opposites (like joy and grief and is balanced in success and failure. He is a Karma Yogi, and therefore though acting is not bound.

His attachment is destroyed, his mind is established in divine knowledge. He acts selflessly and therefore no effect of action tinges his mind.

(IV-19 to 23)

A person who is really religious knows the reality of things, even though seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing, speaking, passing urine and stools,

taking and opening or closing the eyes believes that he does nothing—it is the senses that are acting on sense-objects.

He offers all actions to God, shaking off attachment. He remains untouched by sin or evil as the lotus leaf by water.

He performs action only with senses, mind, intellect and body, withdrawing the feeling of mine-ness in respect of them and shaking off attachment simply for the sake of self purification.

Unaffected by fruits of actions, he attains peace, unlike a selfish person who acts through attachment for the fruits of actions and in the process gets tied down to them.

A religious person does nothing himself and gets nothing done by others. He rests happily in God, mentally relegating all actions to the city of nine gates i.e. body.

(V-8 to 13)

The Lord is firmly established in the heart of a really religious person, whose mind is perfectly calm in the midst of pairs of opposites such as cold and heat, joy and sorrow, honour and ignominy.

His mental composure is unchangeable under all circumstances, his senses are thoroughly subdued, and to him a stone, a piece of gold make no difference.

He regards well-wishers, friends, foes, neutrals, mediators, the objects of hatred, relatives, the virtuous and the sinful alike.

(VI-7 to 9)

Real followers of religion are great souls who possess a divine nature knowing the Lord as the prime cause of creation and imperishable. They worship the Lord constantly with undivided mind.

They constantly chant the Lord's names and glories and strive to attain the Lord, and bowing, again and again, to Him, those devotees of firm resolve, ever united with the Lord through meditation, worship Him with single-minded devotion.

(IX-13 to 14)

Whatever a religious man does, whatever he eats, whatever he offers as oblations to sacred fire, whatever he bestows as a gift, whatever he does by way of penance, that is all offered to the Lord.

(IX-27)

He who is free from malice towards all beings, who is friendly as well as compassionate, who has no feeling of mineness and is free from egotism, to whom pleasure and pain are alike and who is forgiving by nature, who is ever content and mentally united to God, who has subdued his body, mind and senses and has a firm resolve, who has surrendered his mind and intellect to the Lord, that devotee is dear to the Supreme.

He who is not a source of annoyance to the world, and who never feels offended with the world, who is free from delight and anger, perturbation and fear, he is dear to the Lord.

He who craves for nothing, who is both internally and externally pure, who is clever and impartial and has risen above all distractions, who renounces the feeling of doership in all undertakings—that devotee is dear to the Lord. He who neither rejoices nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, who renounces both good and evil and is full of devotion to the Lord, is dear to the Lord.

He who is alike to friend and foe, and likewise to honour and ignominy, who is alike to heat and cold, pleasure and pain etc. and is free from attachment;

He who takes praise and reproach alike, who is given to contemplation and content with whatever comes unasked for, without attachment to home, fixed in mind and full of devotion to the Lord is dear to God.

(XII-13 to 19)

A person with religious heart possesses fearlessness, absolute purity of heart, constant absorption of mind in meditation, charitableness, control of the senses, performance of selfless acts, study of those works which inculcate religiousness, chanting of Divine names and glories, bearing of hardship and simplicity of mind and heart. Similarly, he has the qualities like non-violence in thought, word and deed, truthfulness and geniality of speech, absence of anger even on provocation, renunciation of the idea of doership in actions, tranquillity of mind, refraining from malicious gossip, kindness to all creatures, absence of attachment to the objects of senses even during their contact with the senses, mildness, sense of shamefulness in doing things not sanctioned by morality, abstaining from idle pursuits.

Sublimity, forgiveness, fortitude, external purity, absence of opposition, absence of the feeling of self-importance. These qualities mark the life and conduct of a person who is really religious.

(XVI-1 to 3)

Hypocrisy, conceit, arrogance, insatiable passion, self-aggrandisement, intoxication of wealth and honour, performing even religious acts with the motive of gaining popularity or beguiling others, egotism, violence, insolence, greediness etc. are the marks of irreligious persons.

(XVI-10 to 21)

The concept of the godhead in the Bhāgavata is very sublime. There is no narrowness in it and it is, really speaking, the culmination of Hindu philosophical thought.

He is the Ultimate Reality and is the one non-dual consciousness (inānam adwayam) and it is the same one Supreme Spirit that has been variously termed as the Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavat (1-2-11). Conceived in His all-transcending, attributeless aspect, He is called Brahman: as the all-originating, all-sustaining, all-regulating dynamic Self of the Universe, He is called Paramātmā; but when He is conceived with all His infinite glorious powers and attributes, manifested in relation to the cosmic order, He is called Bhagavater Bhagavana.

It is as the Bhagavat that he is the object of supreme reverence, admiration and devotion (2-1-7).

All the Vedas and sacrifices have that Vāsudeva as their object. (1-2-28) And lest we should forget, the Bhāgavata says that this Vāsudeva is none else than Brahman who is self-luminous and attributeless (5-16-3). This concept of

Brahm is the peak point of human philosophy. For it is a step much further than monotheism.

In one famous sloka Bhāgavata reveals His true character to Brahmā. 'In the beginning (i.e. before My self-manifestation as the cosmic order) I alone existed in and by myself and there was nothing other than Myself, whether in a manifested or in an unmanifested form. After the creation of diversities also I alone exist (because all these are My self-manifestations and nothing has existence independent of and separate from Me). After the destruction of all these diversities also I alone will exist (because all my temporal self-manifestations will be dissolved in time in Me) (2-9-32). He is truth, perfect, one without origin, attributeless and one (2-6-39). The entire universe is embedded in Him (2-6-30).

As the nata makes wooden dolls dance, so He makes the entire universe dance with the string of Brahmā etc.—(5-18-26).

His real rūpa (form) cannot be grasped by eyes or intelligence (8-1-11)

As pots etc. cannot see their spectator, so no being can see the Supreme Being through senses, mind, heart etc. (6-3-10)

Even the Brahma-vadi-s and adepts have tried their best to know the Supreme Being who is a non-attached spectator of the world-process, but could not know Him (10-3-24)

But what to talk about them, even Brahma, Śāṅkara etc. cannot understand His real nature despite their intelligence. (7-10-50)

The God is thus inaccessible even for mind and language and one whom even the great gods like Rudra etc. cannot reach (6-6-40)

Therefore let us worship Him by silence, devotion and restraint (7-20-50)

A person seeking help from any one else than that Supreme Being is an utter fool and is attempting to cross the ocean by catching a dog's tail (6-9-22)

That Supreme Being has countless names—a fact that the wise people know and the ignorant do not know (10-8-15)

The intelligence of the beings has been baffled by the Māyā of name and form. Therefore though they sing the glories of the Supreme Being by various philosophies, yet cannot realize His real nature or form (8-14-10)

That one reality alone is described by the wise in accordance with their tendencies and likings (2-4-21)

The learned recount His lilās as the birds fly in the sky according to the capacity they possess (1-18-23)

He is the miraculous cause (8-3-110 to 16, 8-12-4, 10-46-31) as He is the cause of the universe, but he himself has no cause.

He is beyond Prakṛti etc. (3-9-44, 325-41, 4-24-42, 3-26-3, 7-1-6, 12-11-28)

He is the pervading principle of the universe (1-8-18, 6-16-23, 7-6-9, 8-3-3, 8-12-11, 10-82-46 and 47)

He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe (11-9-21) Like a spider He unfolds and folds it (12-7-20) All the gods reside in Him and all the Vedas or knowledge is contained in Him (9-18-48). He is interwoven in the universe just as yarn is interwoven in cloth (6-3-12)

His real form is obtained only through experience and intuition (7-6-23).

The Unity of the Paramatman and the Jīva

From the point of the reality, the Supreme Soul and the Individual Soul are one and the same. The former is Vijnana-ghana or the mass of knowledge, while the latter is Vijnāna-kana or a particle of that knowledge.

As fire is one, but when it is produced from many woods it appears many, so God is one, but appears many beings (1-2-32)

In fact one of the names given to the God is Purusa. He is called purusā as He creates the pura-s (cities) in the form of bodies of men, animals, birds, sages and celestial beings and resides in these pura-s in the Jiva-s (7-14-37)

God alone creates bodies with five elements and resides in the form of Jiva-s and enjoys sixteen viśaya-s with five senses of knowledge, five senses of action, five prāṇa-s, and one manas—these sixteen kalā-s in all. (2-5-23)

The Jiva-s are not different from the Supreme Being as ghatākāśa or ether in the pot is not different from the Mahākāśa or ether in the universe (3-15-33)

He enters the bodies of the beings in the form of Jīvas. The Omnipotent Lord Himself illumines the senses in the form of Jīvas (11-3-4, 5)

While worshipping God one should think oneself as full of God (11-3-54)

The Brahman alone became two—the Māyā and the Jīva, the sight and the seer. (11-24-3)

The allegorical story of Puranjana establishes the point with emphasis (4-29).

Thus the Bhāgavata has left no doubt about the essential

identity of the Brahman and the Jiva, Paramatman and the Jivatma.

The Differing Interpretations and Names

The Bhāgavata has been alive to the fact that people have different tendencies and likings. They are, so to say, blinded by Māyā and hence incapable of knowing the real nature of the Godhead. Their approaches to the Reality are bound to be different and even countless. If we can reach to Delhi by so many roads, the roads leading to God are bound to be manifold. The very existence of so many religions in the world proves it. Hinduism, Tao-ism, Juda-ism, Greek religion, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sufism are already well-known to the world. But there may be many more religions not known to the educated mind flourishing in the corners of this universe. And even every religion mentioned above has its own varieties.

It is not possible for us to get unanimity about the most tangible objects of the world. We have different theories about politics, society, evolution, war, peace, progress, good, evil, right, wrong, prevalent on the earth. If we cannot have unanimous opinion about all these, it will be a vain hope to think that we have reached a stage where to describe the Supreme Truth in a unanimous way is possible.

It is inborn with the man to put his own interpretation about everything. There is a great saying in Sanskrit that says that every man has his own distinct intellect. The man has been accursed with a differentiating tendency.

In the words of the Bhāgavata 'the intelligence of the beings has been baffled by the Māyā of name and form. (8-14-10). In fact this creation is generated by Māyā. The Lord desired to be many and accepted three gunas with Māyā (2-5-18). So this Māyā has made one appear as the countless, the non-dual as the manifold.

But let this Māyā work. What is the attitude of the wise

who have understood the intrinsic nature of this *Māyā* and have experienced the real nature of the Indescribable? Obviously it should be quite liberal. No narrowness, no conservativeness can be found in their attitude.

The *Bhāgavata* has adopted this very sane and sagacious opinion. The *Jñāni* Garga says to Nanda: 'Many are the names and forms of thy Son (who is none else than the Supreme Being) according to *guna* and *karma*; attributes and actions. I know it. But others being ignorant do not know it. (10-8-15)

That Supreme Being alone is described in various ways by the wise according to their likings. (2-4-21)

That Self-luminous God alone is realized by various actions, sacrifices, donations, austerity, study of the *vedas*, restraint of mind and the senses, renunciation of actions, *yogas*, devotion, acts done with desires or without desires, knowledge of the self, strong detachment etc. (3-32-32, 33-36)

'He is full of many names', forms and features (5-18-33)

He alone has been imagined in the forms of and names of different gods (6-18-34) He alone is the object of the different *vada* i.e. religious and philosophical systems (10-16-43)

In the opinion of the *Bhāgavata*, that Absolute is like the odourless air that assumes different scents and fragrances with the association therewith. Thus God assumes different forms according to the sentiments of the worshippers. (6-4-34)

In this way the conception of God as delineated by the *Bhāgavata* is one of the greatest achievements of human thought and enlightenment.

The concept of the *Īśā* is quite old, so far as India is

concerned. It is rooted into the ancient philosophical thought of India. Though we have become more familiar with the concept of Māyā due to a brilliant exposition thereof by Shankara, yet personally I feel that the concept of Līlā has much better philosophical and religious significance than even the term Māyā. It is the most invaluable term in the domain of religion.

The term Līlā occurs for the first time in an important work known as the Brahma Sūtras or the Vedānta Sūtras of Badarayana. In the second canto thereof we find an aphorism: lokavattu līlākaivalyaṁ (2-33).

The Vedānta Sūtras occupy one of the most important positions in the hierarchy of the Vedānta school. In fact the edifice of the Vedānta is based on three major works viz. the Upanishads, the Vedāntasūtras and the Bhagavadgītā. These works constitute the Prasthanatrayam of the Vedānta. However the most extensive use of the term is found in the Bhagavata. The Bhagavata is the finest work of religion. It expounds the finest type of religion i.e. the real nature of religion. Religion to be effective must be based on intense love for the Lord. The Bhagavata presents that view of devotion or the most intimate love for God which shuns argumentations and rejoices in spontaneous and solid affection or attachment.

The most intricate problem of philosophy is to establish a relation between the Absolute and the universe. With the help of brilliant logic Shankara in India and Bradley in the West have established the fact that the Absolute is the ultimate Reality and everything else is just phenomenal.

The Bhagavata made it a point to worship only the Supreme. In the very first shloka, the objective has been stated in unmistakeable terms: let us worship only the Ultimate Truth (satyaṁ param dhīmahi—1. 1. 1). Lord Krishna was worshipped as He is the Brahman (1-2-11). The entire world is pervaded by that Supreme Self (8-1-10) and the identity of the Self and the Brahman has been expressly accepted (12-13-12).

The problem under the circumstances is how to reconcile the multiplicity of the world with the existence of One Supreme Reality. "The history of philosophy in India as well as Europe", observes Radhakrishna, "has been one long illustration of the inability of the human mind to solve the mystery of the relation of God to the world" (*The Hindu View of Life*, Unwin Books, 1960, p. 49). Radhakrishnan is right. But the trouble with the human mind is that it cannot remain contented till a mystery is solved. Hence the philosophical search for the cause of the universe shall continue.

Shankara tried to show that the world is non-different (ananya), non-independent (avyatirikta) effect of Brahman. "The effect is the manifested world beginning with ākāśa:" states Shankara "the cause is the highest Brahman. With this cause, in the sense of the highest reality, the effect is identical having no existence beyond it" (*Svāvērika Bhāṣya*, ii.i. 14). It should be remembered that Shankara does not accept the *Parīṇāmavāda* according to which the cause becomes transformed when it manifests itself as the effect. After discarding every attempt of exhibiting relation between the absolute and the world on the analogy derived from this world of name and form, Shankara concludes that the relation of the finite universe with the Infinite Being is a mystery for human intelligence. Just as when a person mistakes rope for a snake, it is a super imposition of the snake on the rope, similarly the world is superimposed on the Brahman. The concept of *Māyā* according to Shankara is a concept accepting human inability to explain the phenomenon in logical terms. "We can never understand," observes Radhakrishnan while elucidating the Shankara's concept of *Māyā*, "how the ultimate reality is related to the world of plurality, since the two are heterogeneous, and every attempt at explanation is bound to fail. This incomprehensibility is brought out by the term *Māyā*." (*Indian Philosophy*, II, p. 573).

We are not much concerned here with the elaborate structure of the arguments that has been constructed by Shankara

to make his concept of Māya intelligible to the world. Suffice it to state that the relation of the Absolute and the world simply defies our comprehension.

Though we should not hold Shankara responsible for the confusion found in the mind of an average man regarding Māyā, it has to be conceded that the ordinary people have this idea somehow present in their mind that the world is just an illusion. When an average man who has not been able to rise to the height of self-realization utters such opinion, that is bound to affect the smooth transaction of our daily routine life. It may raise some ethical problems too. I think that the term Līlā is free from this weakness.

According to the Bhāgavata, the Supreme creates the world of our Līlā (1-1-17). He accepts Prakṛti, the organ of creation by Līlā (3-26-4). The immense creations of the deities, seers, animals, birds, men etc. are because of Līlā. (6-9-26). But what is meant by Līlā ?

Ordinarily by Līlā is meant 'play'. Play is 'activity pursued for its own sake as activity and without regard to any value in the product.' (Education : Its Data And First Principles, by Percy Nunn, 3rd edition, p. 86). Play has a spontaneity which is not determined by any objective and is an expression of joy and freedom." "Līlā or sport brings out the rationality", asserts Radhakrishna, "the freedom and the joyous exercise of spontaneity involved in the art of creation" (The Hindu View of Life p. 50). Just as a place of art is the creation of the Supreme Artist. The evolution of the world of nāma-rupā (name and shape) is the evolution of infinite forms of beauty from the infinite Beauty. The creative activity of the Supreme in the world of space and time is a rhythmic symphony. Viewed from this aesthetic angle, the problems of evil and sin, misery and pang characterizing this universe never arise.

Why should any one complain about the agony and misery ? One is just playing a role of that type in this great drama of

world Drama. One is nondistinct from the Lord, why should one experience grief and sorrow then. The Bhāgavata is emphatic : The Supreme is playing by creating Himself in the multifarious forms (2-4-7).

But a basic question has remained to be answered. Granted it is a play and all that is seen is only a part of the play; but why and how this play has been brought into being ? In fact Vidura puts a query before Maitreya as to why the Supreme should cause suffering even in Līlā to the individuals (3-3-2 to 7). The answer to this question is Māyā. This Māyā is the same as we find in the writings of Shankara but with slight and yet significant difference. The Māyā of the Bhāgavata is not indescribable element like that of Shankara's.

The basic difference between the concept of Māyā of the Bhāgavata and that of Shankara is that according to the Bhāgavata Māyā is both real and non-real (sad-asad-rupa-1-2-30) while according to Shankara Māyā is indescribable (nāsadarūpā nasadarūpā māyā naivopahayātmikā anirvāchya mithyābhūta sanātani). Elaborating the concept, the Bhāgavata describes Māyā as that which makes a thing appear as existing when it is not so in reality, like the existence of two moons; or makes a real thing appear non-existing just as Rahu does not appear in the constellations of the sky (2-9-33). At another place Māyā has been described as the power of the Supreme which is both real and unreal and with the help of which this universe is created (3-5-25). Again Māyā has been depicted as the power which makes a real thing appear its quite contradictory e.g. the Atman which is ever free and the Lord of all appears as bound and unhappy (3-7-9).

The Bhāgavata has metaphorically described Māyā as the daughter of Adharma and his wife Mrisha. The brother of Māyā is Dambha or pride. This clearly indicates the deceptive character of Māyā (4-8-2). Māyā is essentially that power with which miraculous acts are performed by God. The

creation of Prakriti by God is due to Māyā. The demon Maya had such miraculous power. He had been called Anantamāyī (7-10-51) and Māyīnam Paramāchārya (7-10-53), the preceptor of the persons well-versed in that power of deception. I do not like to dilate on the point here. That shall be done on some other occasion.

What is important for us is to note that Māyā of the Bhāgavata is not absolutely false like a dream to start with. It is real so far the world is concerned. But it is unreal when the Supreme is reached, when the falsity of everything becomes crystal clear to the person. It is here that the concept of Māyā of the Bhāgavata becomes superior to the Shankara's concept of Māyā. To describe Māyā as indescribable is not a very happy description of Māyā. It gives rather a confused picture of the concept. In fact this concept has proved to be so confusing that this confusion cannot be solved without a very intensive study of Shankara's philosophy. On the other hand, Māyā of the Bhāgavata is not confusing at all. It can be intelligible very easily even to a lay man.

When we try to connect the concept of Līlā and Māyā the picture becomes still more vivid. The term Līlā implies certain reality of the world. It gives an impression that one should not be lost in it and one must play one's part with dignity and decorum. Why this Līlā is being laid before us is because of Māyā. If one cares to go deep into this Līlā existing in the form of the universe, one shall find that it is all ultimately false. If one has got this capacity of fathoming deep into the mysteries of life, one shall be happy as one shall get the Ultimate Reality and if one has no interest or capacity of fathoming that depth, one shall be happy with the idea that God is playing a play in the form of the world and every one is required to play one's role efficiently and gracefully. That will make one really happy in the end.

Thus the Bhāgavata has given us a magnificent concept of Līlā that can bring happiness even to the ignorant and un-

cultivated and which at the same time does not block the way of self-realization. I have yet to come across a more significant and magnificent concept of philosophy than *Līlā*.

No one therefore should think even for a moment that the *Bhāgavata* has any soft corner for anything but nondualism. But its approach is practical. It does not believe in that heartless, soulless logical approach that makes a lay reader cold. If the nondualism has to make its imprint upon human mind, its way can be that of the *Bhāgavata* alone.

The outstanding feature of the *Bhagavata's* God is that He is enchantingly beautiful. He is the beauty incarnate.
(X-44-14)

The beauty has its rare attraction. Therefore the *Bhāgavata* depicted its God who is nondifferent from the Absolute as exceedingly charming. *Kṛṣṇa* has such beauty that the entire
(X-32-2)

world is attracted towards Him. The devotee who comes to *Kṛṣṇa* first of all drawn by the magic of His beauty is able to achieve the supreme truth sooner or later as by and by his entire being is transformed due to his attachment for the Supreme.

(I-9-10)

Though the Absolute is formless, by *Māyā* He assumes form so that his devotees may draw an inspiration from His presence.

(I-14-35)

By *Māyā* that Supreme undertakes the work of creating, protecting and destroying the universe.

(II-5-18 : III-13-43)

The action of the Supreme has been termed *līlā* by the *Bhāgavata*. The entire *līlā* of *Kṛṣṇa* admits of an allegorical

explanation. Kṛṣṇa Himself has been interpreted as the Supreme God-head who is the biggest and who is spread all over. Gopalapūrva-tapaniyopanīṣad has interpreted the entire līlā of Kṛṣṇa allegorically. The Bhāgavata has brought about the Absolute nature of the Godhead by using adjectives indicating quality-lessness e.g. nirguṇa, anadi, (III-9-39) etc; and by describing the state before creation; by suggesting that He is (II-3-35 to 40)

beyond description even by Śāṅkara, Brahmā etc; and by calling Him Praṇava or mystic sign called AUM. God assumes an (VII-10-50) unembodied form as the worship of the Formless (XII-vi-41)

and Qualityless is very difficult for a lay. Avatāra means coming of the Supreme to a level where a layman can find sufficient glory in Him to follow Him. Saguṇa is meant for the novice. Ultimately Saguna aspect disappears and the Nirguṇa aspect of the God is revealed like the rainbow which ultimately disappears in the sky, the symbol of the Infinite.

(X-20-4)

Human beings have three sorts of tendencies in accordance with the predominance of cognition, conation and affection. When the cognitive tendency becomes dominant a man worships the Formless aspect of God; when conative aspect becomes powerful, he worships divine forms like Viṣṇu, Śiva etc; and when affection predominates, one worships the incarnations like Rāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa etc. To appeal to these respective tendencies, the Bhāgavata has depicted God in the respective ways. Kṛṣṇa is Infinite, God and Avatāra according to the individual tendencies. (76) Unless the Supreme has these triple aspects He cannot satisfy each and every type of human beings. The merit of this psychological approach lies in the fact that even the lowliest can be brought on the level of the best by and by through this process and the monopoly of knowledge in the hands of a few is destroyed.

Human beings have great fascination for beauty. It attracts human minds like a magnet attracting pieces of

iron. The Bhāgavata is fully alive to this fact. That is why Śrīkṛṣṇa has been depicted as infinitely charming. Attracted by this charm human beings come closer to Him and ultimately they become transformed souls.

The Bhāgavata's God has thus the capacity of satisfying personality of any shade. It moreover meets the demands of both the men of knowledge as well as the men of devotion.

We can easily understand the magnificence of the concept of Absolute as enunciated in the Bhāgavata. Though the Bhāgavata is emphatic in asserting that the Supreme is formless and the world of plurality is unreal from the point of the ultimate truth, it tries to put its view in a very psychological and wise way. It has not discarded the natural tendencies of man; for no one can go against them. What is needed is to transform them gradually till the highest point of truth is reached.

The unique contribution of the Bhāgavata lies in its principle of Līlā. Līlā means sport. But by Līlā is not meant the sport of the human beings. (79) It is the play of the Supreme. When He desires to play, He multiplies Himself in the form of the universe. (80) The world is thus the product of a spirit of celestial mirth and gaiety. (81) One has to understand this fact. Once we understand this basic truth, we shall develop a tendency of nonattachment to the world; for we are all playing a play, we all being essentially the Absolute. After this attitude of nonattachment the next step of treating this world of multiplicity as unreal follows logically. The seeming plurality is a fiction of our ignorant mind. (83) Thus we find that the Bhāgavata has invented a very effective instrument of reconciling the duties of the world (for every player has his duties) with the metaphysical truth of nondualism. We need not discard this universe, for it is the play of the Supreme. What is needed is simply the recognition of the fact that we should not think ourselves bound by the shackles of misery and pangs, unhappiness and sorrows; for this goes against

our basic nature of sheer bliss, knowledge and consciousness. The Bhāgavata has made frantic effort to make this point clear by narrating many symbolic stories like Puranjana upākhyāna (IV-29)

According to the Bhagavata the best way to realize the Supreme is to follow the path of devotion. Devotion is the (X-51-56)

dedication of an individual's entire being to the Supreme. Nine
• (I-20. 19-20)

means have been suggested for the cultivation of this sense of devotion. These ways are śravaṇa (listening to the glory of God), kīrtana (recitation), smarāṇa (remembering), pāda-sevā (serving God's feet), archana (worshipping), vandana (saluting), dāśya (service-tude), sakhya (companionship) and ātma-nivedana (surrender) (vii-v-23. 24)

This devotion is not unmixed with knowledge and renunciation (1-ii-12).

Moreover this devotion can be divided into two kinds according to the Bhāgavata viz. saguṇa and nirguṇa. Saguṇa bhakti admits three divisions, tāmasa, rājasa and sātāvika. Tāmasa devotion is devotion of the greedy, angry, envious persons etc. The devotion undertaken with a desire of wealth, renown etc is called the Rājasa devotion. The devotion prompted by a dedication of the fruits of action to the Supreme is termed Sātāviki (III. xxix. 7-10). But the best form of devotion is not even the sātāviki devotion. The most sublime type of devotion is 'nirguṇa' or 'ahaitukī' devotion. Herein devotion does not aim at any ulterior object but itself. Even the five types of liberation are discarded for the sake of this devotion. (III. 29. 11-12 and III. 29. 13)

This devotion is a transforming experience. It changes the entire outlook of an individual's life. He sees in all

beings nothing but the Supreme (XI. ii. 45). He never covets wealth etc. never differentiates between one being and the other, and has his senses and mind steady (XI. ii. 52). We can say that though he dwells on the earth, he is a liberated soul having no usual carnal desires and tendencies. He is a spiritual superman.

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